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EDITED BY

REV. EDWARD HASTINGS, M.A.

JOINT EDITOR OF 'THE EXPOSITORY TIMES'

FOUNDED BY

JAMES HASTINGS, D.D.

EDITOR OF
'THE DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE'
'THE ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF RELIGION AND ETHICS'
AND OTHER WORKS

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

VOLUME I

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THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

INTRODUCTION

The importance of the Epistle to the Romans can hardly be exaggerated in view of the part it has played in the life of the Christian Church and the strong influence it has exerted on the formation and deepening of personal religion. Few writings can have proved so deeply effective in the experience of so many readers of all types and races. Its immediate influence can only be guessed, though it is indicated in part by echoes of its thought and language in 1 Peter, James, and Hebrews, and also in the works of some of the earliest Apostolic Fathers, notably in 1 Clement and the Epistle of Barnabas. Its influence upon the formation of Christian theology has been profound, especially during the Reformation period in the teaching of Luther and of Calvin, while to-day, in the hands of Karl Barth and other teachers, it is again manifesting its power as a source of vital religion.

In part, the strength of the Epistle lies in the variety of its contents, which meet different aspects of human need; but, most of all, it is due to the virility of the religious experience of its writer, St Paul, whose real inspiration is seen in his power to evoke a deep and sympathetic response in the hearts of his readers.

I

The Contents of the Epistle

The Epistle may conveniently be divided into five parts.

1. *Introductory* (i. 1-17).—In this part appear the salutation, the thanksgiving for the faith of the readers, and St Paul's explanation of his desire to visit Rome. In the closing verse one of the keynotes of the Epistle is struck in the claim that in the Gospel 'is revealed a righteousness of God from faith unto faith' (i. 17).

2. *The Doctrinal Section of the Epistle* (i. 18–viii.).—A moving picture is first given of the failure of the Gentiles to attain to righteousness (i. 18-32), followed by a like description of the failure of the Jews, in spite of the marked advantages enjoyed by them (ii. 1–iii. 8). Then follows an appeal to Scripture, as illustrating the universality of sin (iii. 9-18), and a very compressed statement is given of a law of righteousness apart from the Law manifested in Jesus Christ, a righteousness of God which is open to the appropriation of all, whether Jews or Gentiles (iii. 19-31). St Paul now turns aside to discuss the objection that Abraham was justified by works (iv.), and to show the intimate connection between the Justification, by which a man is pronounced to be righteous, and the life of peace and joy made possible because of the reconciliation received through Jesus Christ (v. 1-11). The next stage is to develop a contrast between Adam's transgression and Christ's obedience, but the attempt breaks off in the endeavour to indicate the surpassing blessings which the believer receives through Christ and, in particular, to show that 'where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly' (v. 12-21). On the basis of this supreme fact it is urged that sin ought to have no dominion over men who have been 'discharged from the law' and have entered upon new life and enjoy its freedom (vi. 1–vii. 6). At this point comes the well-known section on the purpose of the Law, the discord it creates when it is recognized, and the deliverance which is effected by Christ (vii. 7-25). Finally, the Apostle describes in burning words freedom and life in the Spirit and the privileges of Sonship open to the believer (viii.).

3. *The Problem of the Rejection of Israel* (ix.–xi.).—In this section of the Epistle the interests are historical and religious. The rejection of Israel, the recipient of great promises, raises the most painful problems in Paul's mind, and he seeks to show that it does not contradict God's justice and is not final. The rejection has made possible the reconciling of the Gentiles, but the 'hardening' is for a time, 'until the fullness of

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the Gentiles be come in' (xi. 25). Paul sums up his convictions in the epigram: 'God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all' (xi. 32), and cries out in wonder as he thinks of 'the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God' (xi. 33-6).

4. *The Ethical Section of the Epistle* (xii.–xv. 13).—This very practical part of the Epistle falls naturally into two portions. In xii.–xiii. are many and varied exhortations, mainly to lowliness of mind, diligence, obedience to civil authorities, and mutual love in view of the approach of the day of the Parousia. In xiv. 1–xv. 13 the virtue of tolerance is urged, on the part of those who are strong towards those who are weak in their understanding and grasp of the faith. The section closes with a benediction (xv. 13).

5. *Explanations and Greetings* (xv. 14–xvi.).—In this final division there are again two main sections. xv. 14-33 consists of personal exhortations and an explanation of the Apostle's plans, and concludes with a brief benediction or prayer (xv. 33). xvi. 1-23 is a letter of commendation on behalf of a certain Phœbe, 'our sister, who is a servant of the church that is at Cenchræa,' together with numerous greetings, and warnings against divisions and false teachers. A benediction appears in xvi. 20*b*. Finally, in xvi. 25-7 stands a longer benediction, with which the Epistle closes.

II

The Purpose of the Epistle

The writer's purpose can be determined only by means of the Epistle itself, and since several distinct interests can be observed at work it is not surprising that very different explanations have been given by commentators. Is the intention that of giving a compendium of the Pauline Gospel? Or, again, is the outstanding interest apologetic, so that the writer seeks to defend the new faith against Jewish propaganda? Are the leading motives those of attack or defence? There is material in the Epistle in favour of all these suggestions, and this points to an inclusive purpose. Dr Moffatt states this well when he writes: 'The purpose of the apostle is rather to re-state, in the light of his experience during the long mission now closing, and in view of the fresh propaganda which he contemplated in the West, the principles of his gospel for the Gentiles in its relation to Judaism.'[1]

III

The Date of the Epistle

As will be observed, the question of the purpose of the Epistle is closely bound up with its date. The indications within the letter point to a relatively advanced period in St Paul's missionary activity, and so support what has been said above. Three passages in chap. xv. are important in this connection. In xv. 19 the Apostle speaks of himself as having fully preached the gospel of Christ 'from Jerusalem, and round about even unto Illyricum.' This statement does not necessarily mean that he had evangelized Illyricum; it may simply mean that he had approached, or crossed, its borders in the course of his mission. In any case, it points to a considerable degree of missionary experience. The same conclusion is suggested by xv. 25, where Paul speaks of his immediate purpose of going to Jerusalem, 'ministering unto the saints.' He is clearly speaking of the same Apostolic Collection for the poor Christians of Jerusalem of which he writes in 2 Cor. viii. and ix. Finally, in xv. 28 he mentions his intention to visit Rome in the course of a journey to Spain: 'When therefore I have accomplished this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will go on by you unto Spain.' The situation is like that which must have existed when Paul was at Corinth during his Third Missionary Journey immediately before his departure for Jerusalem (Acts xx. 1-3). Accordingly, the most probable date for the Epistle is about A.D. 56 or 57.

IV

The Genuineness of the Epistle

Already in these notes the Pauline authorship of Romans has been assumed. Happily, this is a question which does not call for much discussion. Even by F. C. Baur and the Tübingen School the genuineness of Romans, Galatians, and 1 and 2 Corinthians was recognized, and in more recent times the theory of Pauline authorship has remained undisputed, except by the

[1] *Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament*, p. 147.

extreme Dutch School. The external evidence is strong. It is probable that there are echoes of the Epistle in the New Testament itself, in 1 Peter, James, and Hebrews. It was known and used by Clement of Rome (*c.* A.D. 95), by Ignatius of Antioch (*c.* A.D. 110), by Polycarp (*c.* A.D. 155), and by Justin Martyr (*c.* A.D. 150), and it was included in Marcion's Canon (*c.* A.D. 140) and in the Muratorian Canon (*c.* A.D. 170-90). It is expressly cited by Irenæus and Clement of Alexandria at the end of the second century, and was employed by early Gnostic sects such as the Valentinians and the Ophites. The internal evidence, supplied by the letter itself, is decisive. Not only does the claim of Pauline authorship appear in the opening verse, but also throughout the Epistle the mind and personality of Paul, as known to us from other letters which bear his name and from the Acts of the Apostles, are clearly and unmistakably reflected, so that to deny its genuineness would be hypercriticism. Paul the Apostle, and no one else, wrote the letter, using Tertius (*cf.* xvi. 22) as his amanuensis.

V

The Readers of the Epistle

It might seem to be a superfluous question to ask whether the readers were Gentiles or Jewish Christians, but some of the expressions used by Paul prompt this question, which must therefore be considered. The references which point to Gentile readers are particularly strong. In i. 5 f. Paul speaks of grace and apostleship which he has received 'unto obedience of faith among all the nations,' and then immediately adds: 'among whom are ye also called to be Jesus Christ's.' In i. 13 he refers to his long-cherished desire to visit his readers, and explains his motive in the words: 'that I might have some fruit in you also, even as in the rest of the Gentiles.' 'I am debtor,' he says, 'both to Greeks and to Barbarians' (i. 14), and the remark is very much to the point if the readers were Gentiles. In xi. 13 he addresses his readers and says: 'I speak to you that are Gentiles.' In itself, this remark may imply that not all the recipients of the letter were Gentiles; but that the great majority, if not all, were such, is decisively shown by Paul's reference to the Apostolic Collection in xv. 26 f., and by his claim to present to God the Gentile Churches themselves as an offering (xv. 16). On the other side, a few passages can be quoted which might seem to point to Jewish-Christian readers. In iv. 1 Paul speaks of 'Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh,' and again, in ix. 10, of 'our father Isaac,' while in vii. 1 he says, in an aside: 'I speak to men that know the law.' These passages are few in number, and, in view of Paul's claim that Old Testament promises are fulfilled in respect of Gentiles, it is possible that even the actual terms employed may be used of Gentiles. The evidence as a whole, however, is best covered by the view that the Roman Church consisted of a Gentile majority and a Jewish-Christian nucleus. It has been held that the section xiv. 1–xv. 13 points to the existence of a Jewish-Christian minority, and certainly Paul's treatment in the Epistle of the problem of the rejection of Israel in ix.–xi. is easily understood if Jewish-Christians, as well as Gentiles, were included in the Church. In any case, there can be little doubt that in the main the readers were Gentiles.

VI

The Unity of the Epistle

Several peculiar features in the textual evidence and in the subject-matter of the existing Epistle raise the question whether we now possess it in its original form. Closely connected with this question is the further inquiry whether sections within the Epistle are not parts of different letters written either to Rome or to Ephesus.

In discussing these points it will be best to state the relevant facts somewhat baldly.

(1) One Greek manuscript (Codex Boernerianus; ninth century) omits the words 'in Rome' in i. 7 and 15, and the same omission, in the case of i. 7, is also indicated in the commentary of 'Ambrosiaster.'

(2) Chaps. xv. and xvi. were omitted by Marcion, and the same omission is also implied in the chapter systems of two important Vulgate MSS. (Codex Amiatinus and Codex Fuldensis).

(3) The Epistle contains no less than three benedictions, in xv. 13, xvi. 20*b*, and 25-7, and perhaps a fourth in xv. 33.

(4) The longest benediction, xvi. 25-7, appears in different places in different MSS. In most

authorities it is found at the end of the Epistle, but in some it is recorded after xiv., in others both after xiv. and at the end, and in two MSS. it is omitted altogether.

None of the facts indicated above compromises the genuineness of any part of chaps. xv. and xvi., unless it be the final benediction, and even in this matter the stronger objection is the similarity of this passage to the language and thought of Ephesians and the Pastoral Epistles. No adequate objection can be brought against the originality of xv. 1–xvi. 23.[1] None the less, the textual facts cry out for explanation, and two theories, or a combination of the two, have gained wide acceptance.

(1) It may be that xv. and xvi. contain portions of Pauline letters which originally were distinct from i.–xiv. Is, for example, xv. 14-33 part of a separate letter sent to the Church at Rome? And, again, is xvi. 1-23 a commendatory letter written by Paul to the Church at Ephesus? There is much to be said for these possibilities, but the second is of such interest and importance that it will be considered separately below. It should be noted that xv. 1-13 is not accounted for by this kind of explanation, for, beyond question, its subject-matter continues the theme of xiv.

(2) A second possibility is that the original Epistle to the Romans was at an early time adapted for purposes of public reading in the Church by omitting the references to Rome in i. 7 and 15 and certain parts of xv. and xvi. Lightfoot, for example, distinguished two stages in the Epistle: (1) St Paul's letter to Rome, consisting of i.–xvi. 23; (2) A second edition for a wider circle, containing xvi. 25-7, but omitting i. 7, 15, xv., and xvi. 1-23. A theory presented by Kirsopp Lake reverses these stages and distinguishes (1) a circular letter including the substance of i.–xiv. and perhaps xvi. 25-7, and (2) a letter to Rome in which Paul added xv., xvi. 1-23, and i. 7 and 15. The advantage of this type of explanation is that it accounts for the presence of the several benedictions in the Epistle and for the striking textual variants which have been mentioned.

[1] xvi. 24 (*cf.* xvi. 20*b*) is omitted by the best MSS. Four other MSS. which omit 20*b* give practically the same reading in 24. On the textual problem as a whole see the valuable discussion on the Integrity of the Epistle in Sanday and Headlam's invaluable commentary on 'Romans' in the *International Critical Commentary* Series, pp. lxxxv.-xcviii.

Perhaps the best solution of what is an interesting and complicated problem is one which combines elements from both theories. It may well be that Paul expanded an earlier letter and added portions of other letters. In this case, the textual evidence and the benedictions point to an early time when the Epistle existed in two forms; they also suggest that Paul's correspondence was more varied and extensive than might otherwise be supposed.

VII

The Destination of xvi. 1-23

A special problem is connected with this section of the Epistle. Whether it begins with 1 or 3, and ends with 20 or 23, are points on which difference of opinion is inevitable.

It has frequently been held that the section is a commendatory epistle written by Paul to the Church at Ephesus, and strong arguments favour this view. It is surprising that Paul should have known so many people (*cf.* 3-15) in a Church which, upon the traditional view, he had not yet visited. Again, some of the persons mentioned are more naturally associated with Ephesus than with Rome. Epænetus (5) is described as 'the firstfruits of Asia unto Christ,' and at the time of the Corinthian correspondence Prisca and Aquila appear to have been resident in Ephesus (*cf.* 1 Cor. xvi. 19, and see 2 Tim. iv. 19). Finally, it is argued, the verses which speak of 'divisions' and 'occasions of stumbling' (17-19) suit the conditions of Ephesus (*cf.* Acts xx. 29 f.) better than those of Rome. Strong as these arguments are, they are not conclusive, and in the more recent phases of the discussion there is a tendency to return to the traditional view. It is pointed out that, as in Colossians, it appears to be Paul's custom to include greetings in letters to churches which he has *not* visited, presumably in order to establish as many links as possible between himself and his readers (*cf.* Col. iv.). It has long been maintained that not only do most of the names in Rom. xvi. 3-15 appear in Roman inscriptions, but that the references to some of the persons mentioned (*e.g.* Narcissus (11) and Aristobulus (10)) favour the Roman hypothesis. Among recent commentators, C. H. Dodd concludes that the arguments for Rome and Ephesus respectively 'come far short of proof

one way or the other.' His conclusion is that 'as the burden of proof rests upon those who would set aside the tradition in favour of a conjecture, we may be content to accept chap. xvi. (except the doxology) as an integral part of the epistle' (*The Epistle to the Romans; The Moffatt New Testament Commentary*, p. xxiv.). Patrick C. Boylan thinks that the reasons for the Ephesian hypothesis 'cannot be regarded as valid,' and observes that 'it is practically unthinkable that Paul could have written a Letter consisting almost exclusively of greetings' (*St Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, p. xxii.). In the want of further evidence the problem must be left unsettled. Perhaps least open to objection is the theory that xvi. 1-23 is part of a later letter to Rome. In this case, however, it would be necessary to assume that after the period represented by 1 Cor. xvi. 19, Prisca and Aquila returned to the city in which formerly they had lived (*cf.* Acts xviii. 2). This assumption is also necessary if the traditional view is held.

VIII

The Leading Ideas of the Epistle

Very many of Paul's deepest and most characteristic ideas find expression in Romans.

Although he does not define *Salvation*, it is clear that he regards it negatively as deliverance from sin, and positively as entrance upon the new life made possible by Christ. In speaking of sin Paul does not hesitate to speak of the *Wrath of God* as 'revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men' (i. 18). While all that is earthly and vindictive must be eliminated from such a conception, it is less than true to Paul's thought to explain the wrath as manifesting the inevitable process of cause and effect in a moral universe; it describes rather the reaction of God's Holy Will against every form of evil.

Much discussion has centred on the idea of the *Righteousness of God* which Paul introduces into such passages as i. 17 and iii. 21 f. Does he mean a Divine activity as in Is. xlvi. 13, li. 5, Ps. xxiv. 5, and other Old Testament passages, or is he thinking of righteousness as an abstract quality of the Divine nature? The tendency of recent exposition is to assert the former of these alternatives, but it is probable that in such statements as iii. 21 f. and iii. 25 f. both an activity and a quality, though not an abstract quality, are meant. A more vital question is raised in Paul's doctrine of *the Cross*, especially as it is reflected in iii. 25 f. In current exposition the teaching of this famous passage is frequently assimilated to that found in v. 8 and in 2 Cor. v. 19. Older interpretations which find in the words: 'whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood,' a Godward and sacrificial reference, are commonly rejected. This point of view is well illustrated in the valuable discussions of C. A. Anderson Scott in *Christianity According to St Paul*, pp. 59-74; *The Abingdon Bible Commentary*, p. 1143 f.; and *Foot-Notes to St Paul*, pp. 25-8. The question is obviously one which calls for serious consideration. It is no doubt true that the researches of C. H. Dodd have shown that the idea of propitiating or appeasing the anger of God is not supported by the usage of the Greek Bible in the case of *hilaskomai* and its cognates; but Dodd has shown no less clearly that these words are used not only of forgiveness and purifying, but also of 'expiation' or the 'covering' of sin (cf. *The Bible and the Greeks*, p. 93 f.), that is, of dealing with sin in such a way that it is no longer an obstacle to fellowship between God and man. If this is so, and especially in view of the words 'in his blood' in iii. 25, the thought is definitely sacrificial. The offering of Christ is one with which the believer identifies himself 'through faith'; its purpose is not to make God gracious, but so to meet sin that in forgiveness God is shown to be righteous, or in Paul's words: 'that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus' (iii. 26).

St Paul's thought in the important passage just mentioned ought not to be separated from what he says elsewhere of *Faith-Union with Christ*. In vi. 3-11 this thought is uppermost. The Death and the Resurrection of Christ are not conceived simply as historical events lying outside Christian experience. On the contrary, the believer is spoken of as baptized into Christ's Death and as sharing in His Resurrection Life. Nothing less than an ethical union of personalities is implied by Paul's language. The experience is mediated in Baptism, by which of course Paul means adult baptism; but no mechanical or magical

process is implied. The union is established through faith in Christ. Equally vital is the Apostle's teaching regarding *the Indwelling Spirit.* The Spirit bears witness with our spirit 'that we are children of God' (viii. 16). He it is who helps our infirmity, and 'makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered' (viii. 26).

Paul's characterization of *the Law* to-day is sometimes criticized as unfair. It should be remembered, however, that if he says that he 'had not known sin, except through the law' (vii. 7), he also says that the law is 'holy' (vii. 12), and 'spiritual' (vii. 14), and includes among the privileges of Israel 'the giving of the law' (ix. 4). It is in Galatians that the vehemence of his argument leads him to speak of those 'of the works of the law' as being 'under a curse' (Gal. iii. 10), and of Christ as 'having redeemed us from the curse of the law' (Gal. iii. 13); and it is absurd to interpret the language of even these passages as containing Paul's considered estimate of the value and purpose of the Law.

The main elements in the teaching of Romans have already been indicated, but no account is complete which does not mention the psychological account of sin given in vii. 14-25, Paul's search for a theodicy in ix.–xi., the richness of his ethical teaching in xii.–xiv., his picture of himself as offering up to God the Gentiles (xv. 16), and the splendour of his hopes for further evangelization where Christ is not yet named (xv. 18-20).

It is not too much to claim that, second only to the Gospels, Romans contains those doctrinal and ethical conceptions which are vital to the continued existence of the Church, and it can be no matter for wonder that again and again the individual Christian rises from his study of the Epistle with the conviction that under God he belongs to a Divine Society with a constant mission and an immortal Gospel.

VINCENT TAYLOR

The Slave of Jesus Christ

Rom. i. 1.—'Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ.'

A MODERN writer has said that it is to-day with St Paul as St Paul himself said that it was with Moses, namely, that a veil is over the hearts of the people when his words are read. And certainly with many Christians that is only too true. To them this great apostle is but a name for a number of difficult themes, for a number of letters hard to be understood, and for a number of unintelligible texts. They have a secret suspicion that he spoiled what they call the pure and simple doctrine of Jesus Christ. They believe that it was he who was responsible for turning Christianity from a very simple ethical system into a system of dogma. They say that to St Paul may be traced nearly all the intellectual and ecclesiastical troubles of Christendom, and therefore they are too ready to set him upon one side as a teacher and leader who may be dispensed with. And they are making a great mistake. One of the benefits that is likely to come from a closer investigation and clearer understanding of the New Testament Scriptures is a better understanding and appreciation of this great apostle. He has been no doubt admired, reverenced, almost worshipped in the past; he has been responsible for great revivals of Christian truth and teaching; but in it all he himself has remained somewhat obscure. He has given to men and women the key to the understanding of the spirit of Christ, but over his own spirit there has been drawn a veil, and it is well for us sometimes to try to get behind his terminology and teaching, and to discover there an intense, passionate, and holy man—one of the few great figures in the world's history, and one from whom much may be learned of the things of God and of the secret of Christ.

¶ In the nineteenth century Paul was obscured behind Paulinism. His letters were studied as treatises on systematic theology. Elaborate theories of atonement, justification, and grace were expounded on his authority, as if he had been a religious philosopher or theological professor like Origen and Thomas Aquinas. The name of the apostle came to be associated with angular and frigid disquisitions

which were rapidly losing their connection with vital religion. It has been left for the scholars of the present century to give us a picture of St Paul as he really was—a man much nearer to George Fox or John Wesley than to Origen or Calvin; the greatest of missionaries and pioneers, and only incidentally a great theologian.[1]

1. *The Man of Action.*—It is interesting to speculate what the Apostle Paul would have become if he had never been converted. It is impossible to conceive him settling down to a Rabbinical career or content with one of the chief places in the Sanhedrin. There is only one other calling we can imagine him in, one that always excited his interest, namely, that of a soldier. There is about him all the restlessness of the campaigner; he is always planning expeditions, and apparently studying maps, marking down strategic positions and routes of approach. Rome fires his imagination, as it fired the thoughts of Hannibal and Alaric; though not to slaughter and sack, but to save and win for the standard of the Cross. And even then it was only as a centre for new campaigns, not as the goal of aspirations, that he wanted to see Rome. He hoped to stretch out beyond to Spain, for this spiritual Alexander was always sighing for fresh worlds to conquer.

¶ David Livingstone tells us that what drew him to Africa was an address by Robert Moffat, in which he said that from one spot he had seen the smoke of a thousand villages which had never been entered by a white man. When he went to Africa, he found the missionaries clustered round the coast. He could not settle amongst them. He had to go far up into the interior, and begin work with the raw material.[2]

It is this tireless and consuming energy that flings Paul about the world. His early educational ambitions had brought him from Tarsus to Jerusalem to sit at the feet of Gamaliel. We can imagine with what enthusiasm he set forth on the way to Damascus, the terrors of the desert journey only adding a spice to the adventure. When the great change came to his soul he felt he must also have a change of scene, and how we wish he could have told us where he went in Arabia and what he did there. Was it Horeb he sought out, and was it among the solitudes of Sinai that he meditated on the meaning of his experience and sought power for his new commission?

How have I seen in Araby Orion,
  Seen without seeing, till he set again,
Known the night-noise and thunder of the lion,
  Silence and sounds of the prodigious plain!

How have I knelt with arms of my aspiring
  Lifted all night in irresponsive air,
Dazed and amazed with overmuch desiring,
  Blank with the utter agony of prayer!

Then his journeys as a Christian missionary! It is plain from the narrative he gives in Second Corinthians that the Book of Acts provides us with only a fragment of his adventures. There were journeys that taxed endurance to the limit and brought him face to face with every experience of peril and danger. And what astonishes us most is to discover that all this was accomplished through great weakness and under the disability of some painful and irritating affliction. It was not as a hardened soldier with no mental troubles that he tramped the Empire, but with a frail body which housed a nervous and sensitive mind.

2. *The Thinker.*—Oliver Wendell Holmes divides thinkers into three classes: first, there are the original thinkers, the producers of thought—a very small class, who give humanity some new ideas; next, there are the retailers of the thoughts of these original men—writers usually of profound speculative powers, who expound, elaborate, and relate the ideas of the original men; lastly, there are the re-retailers, who illustrate and popularize the same ideas. Paul belonged to the first class. In the realm of creative thought the Apostle deserves to rank as one of the master minds of the world. It is more than possible that we find in his thought an anticipation of the idea of evolution. He conceives of history as God's great educational system in which the lessons change as the learning proceeds, while yet one purpose runs through all. He was familiar with that modern idea we are trying to analyse, the solidarity of the race, with all that it means both for the sharing of sin and for the possibility of redemption. His representation of Christ as cosmic, the cause and soul of the world, gave him the idea of the unity of Nature and the Divine mind that could be discovered by its study, while he traced

[1] W. R. Inge, *Outspoken Essays*, 206.
[2] James Robbie, *The Personality of St Paul*, 85.

the whole to personality as its clue and consummation in a way we are just beginning to follow for ourselves.

But what strikes us most is the fine balance of his mind. One can see that Paul's interests are intellectual and doctrinal. Yet there is nothing of doctrine for doctrine's sake. The wonderful passage on the self-emptying of Jesus Christ is written not in the interests of speculation, but in order to get two women at Philippi to sink their personal differences by reminding them how the Lord of Glory stooped to the humblest life. The great chapter on the Resurrection was simply written to hearten people and encourage them in their work.

The ethical teaching of St Paul has been strangely neglected, but even in an age which knew Seneca and Epictetus it breathes a fresh and beautiful spirit, the whole dominated by the perception that life is measured by the success of our relationships one to another. If we can understand little of God's mysteries then he reminds us that we can be kind and courteous, that the best way to conquer our enemies is to break them down with generosity and forgiveness, and that there is never any quarrel in life which is worth continuing past nightfall. Behind the theologian we touch here one who is thoroughly human and who has kept through life's hardships the heart of a little child.

3. *The Slave of Jesus Christ.*—Here is the greatest mind that the Christian faith has ever attracted, and one of the greatest the world has seen, but Paul himself tells us that there is nothing he desires to know besides Christ Jesus and Him crucified. This is no narrow contempt for other knowledge, but a confession that here is something which absorbs and exhausts the intellect. His was a nature of boundless ambitions, but he tells us that everything the world can offer is refuse besides the one experience of being found in Christ. Here is an energy to which life offers glorious opportunity, but for him life is itself summed up as Christ.

Everywhere there is the note of personal abandonment. 'Who loved me and gave himself for me'; 'Jesus my Lord.' Here is the greatest of the saints, and this is his one confidence: Jesus Christ and His sacrificing love. Paul was naturally a proud man, quite able on occasion to stand upon his dignity and claim the position that was his due. To those who challenged him he was Paul the Apostle, not by man nor of man, but commissioned of God. But before Christ he is just His slave.

There can be no doubt that in this attitude Paul did penetrate to a renewing and enlarging secret of human personality; he did find in the Saviourhood of Christ a rest, a strength, and a harmony which are sought elsewhere in vain. But that did not come to Paul easily. He had been brought up to regard ethical attainment as the one end of life, and to confess that he has to look to another for illumination and power must have cost him the death of his pride and the crucifixion of his self-esteem. The pride in self-sufficiency is enough to keep many of us out of the great experience.

And we can see the change that Christ wrought in Paul. It is hardly noticed what a revolution in the stock ideas of his mind Christ made; but the very fact that the change is not sufficient entirely to obliterate the old way of thinking reveals how profound the change really was. He had stood for the most exclusive attitude towards the Gentile world. Now he sets himself to make the gate for them as wide as possible and to learn every possible means of approaching their minds. He became all things to all men in order that by all means he might save some. Paul was a conservative constitutionalist, with a great reverence for the powers that be, and it must have been a sore humiliation to find himself suspected by the authorities. He believed that the magistrate bore the sword only for evildoers; but it was to that very sword that he had to bare his neck for the sake of Jesus Christ.

The effect of grace on his spirit was chastening and mellowing. Naturally intolerant and impatient, he learned how to suffer fools gladly. Easily hurt by neglect or false accusation, he would humble himself to win men to the obedience of Christ. His relations with the Church at Corinth mark the miracle that has taken place. He was scandalously insulted, his authority disputed, his veracity questioned, and we see this proud and aristocratic soul setting himself by every design of reproach, entreaty, and irony to establish true relationship again. No one can doubt that this was the effect of realizing how he had been dealt with by Christ. The neglect of the Philippian Church, and indeed the whole miserable business of dependence upon the charity of others, must

have been a sore point with him, but he excuses them and makes an elaborate jest out of the whole circumstance. 'I have learned,' he says, 'to be content.' He did not learn that easily.

And what a great encouragement he is to us all. We are sometimes cast down by the lack of spiritual progress we make, by the faults which ruin our work and spoil our characters, which nothing seems able to eradicate, and by our utter incapacity for the mighty tasks that call us. And then we think of Paul and of what Christ made of him, and we go back to the Cross to look at it again, and invite the Crucified to lift us up with Him. And even if life passes, the great conquest seems not to have been made, and so little has been accomplished when there was so much to be done, we content ourselves with this greatest of all consolations, which also sufficed his noble heart: we have been loved by Christ, and that has made life worth while.

It is from a prison cell, as so often, that there comes the most heartening doctrine. He gets to Rome at last, but in chains, and to face the death sentence. But what does that matter if only by that means the gospel is published in the Imperial court and city? Rejoice, he tells us again and again, using the Greek word for 'farewell' and taking hold of its original meaning. When we face a world to-day that seems as if it has nothing but contempt for Christ Jesus and Him crucified, when we confront a civilization proud in its self-sufficiency and confident in its material powers, it seems impossible that Christ can ever win. And then we think of St Paul, almost alone at the last, and yet confident that Christ will triumph. And when he goes out to meet his death it is with a flourish of his sword and one backward ringing cheer that the crown is in sight and the race has been won. So he passes, a great soul made greater still by Christ.

¶ To despair of the world, if we believe Paul, is simply to despair of Christ. It is to proclaim oneself an atheist. It is to take sides with the forces of Antichrist. For if the redeeming death and resurrection reveal a 'love divine, all loves excelling,' they reveal also a divine determination which nothing in earth or hell shall prevail to break, and a Christ who is marching from the green hill where He died to the throne of all the world.[1]

[1] J. S. Stewart, *A Man in Christ*, 319.

The Gospel of God

Rom. i. 1.—'Separated unto the gospel of God.'

Familiar though we are with the word gospel, both when it is used by itself and when it is used along with certain qualifying phrases, we can scarcely fail to be struck with the particular expression in the text 'the gospel of God.' It occurs very seldom in the New Testament. We find it once in the Revised Version of St Mark's Gospel, and once in the writings of St Peter. The Apostle Paul uses it five times in all—three times in his First Epistle to the Thessalonians, and once in his Epistle to the Romans, and in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. A single instance of its usage, in a modified form, is to be found also in the Apostle's address to the elders of the Church at Ephesus, and in his Pastoral Letter to Timothy. The infrequency of its occurrence, therefore, may be taken as accounting for the fact that the expression arrests our attention when we come across it in our reading of Scripture.

When we wish to distinguish the four Memoirs of Christ from the rest of the contents of the New Testament, we refer to them as the Gospels. That designation, which came into vogue only during the second century, marks off those biographical writings from the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles, and the Revelation of St John.

Again, when we wish to describe in a single word the truth which the Church of Christ professes to believe, and the message which the Church of Christ is required to proclaim to the world, we speak of the gospel. The gospel is the creed of Christian people; it is the sum and substance of the faith which they are bound both to 'hold fast,' and to 'hold forth.'

Now what is the subject-matter of the gospel? In his Epistle to the Ephesians the Apostle Paul makes use of these expressions—the 'gospel of your salvation,' and the 'gospel of peace.' But 'salvation' and 'peace' do not represent the subject-matter of the gospel. They declare its purpose and issue. The gospel is meant to bring to men, and it does in fact bring to all who accept it, the wide and complex blessings indicated by these two great words. The subject-matter proper of the gospel, however, is announced by the text. It is God Himself.

The commonest designation of the gospel in the New Testament is the 'gospel of Christ.' When we bring both forms together we are able to see certain old truths in a new light.

1. Let us take them in this order. First—'*The Gospel of God is the Gospel of Christ.*'—If that is a proposition which we do not actually meet with in the New Testament, it states what every New Testament writer assumes and thoroughly believes. The knowledge of God which they are all conscious of enjoying is recognized by them as a mediated knowledge, as having been revealed to them through Jesus Christ. The God in whom they believe is the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. They have no doctrine concerning God to communicate that is based merely on philosophical speculations of their own, or on traditional ideas inherited by them. They write as those who have found God in the man Christ Jesus.

In the facts of the history of Jesus of Nazareth we have the revelation of God. That whole career in Galilee and Judea is an unveiling of the heart of God. It is not God postulated as the First Cause of all created things, identified as the Ultimate Principle of the Universe and the Absolute, felt as an encompassing Presence by sensitive minds—it is not God so apprehended and conceived of that is the immediate subject of the gospel. It is God manifest in the flesh. All the compassion and mercy, the purity and truth, the justice and holiness, the gentleness and brotherliness of Jesus Christ declare to us what God is. 'We ought not to think,' said the Apostle Paul at Athens, 'that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and device of man.' 'Being the offspring of God,' we ought not to think that. Through no such medium, however exquisitely treated, can God be worthily represented. There is one, and only one, medium capable of revealing Him, adapted to so sublime an office; and that is this human life of ours purified and perfected for the purpose. And in the fullness of the time the Word was made flesh, Immanuel appeared in our midst, God manifested Himself in the sinless human life and incorruptible experience of Jesus Christ.

¶ A little child who was being put to bed by his mother suddenly realized his lonely plight, as the mother gave her good-night kiss, turned out the light and started for the door. 'Am I to be left all alone, and in the dark, too?' the child anxiously asked. 'Yes, my dear,' the mother said, 'but you know you have God with you all the time.' 'Yes, I know God is here,' the child answered, 'but I want someone who has a face.'[1]

In the ripeness of the age
  This, the hidden heart of love,
Dimly guessed by seer and sage,
  Comes to meet us from above:
Unto us a Child is born,
  Unto us a Son is given,
King, but crowned with many a thorn,
  Conqueror, though His side be riven.

Not as warrior, girt with sword,
  Hosts of wickedness to smite;
Not as angel from the Lord
  Sent, the wrong by force to right;
Hands that laboured, lips that blessed,
  Feet our common ways that trod—
Man, complete in love, expressed
    That eternal Heart of God.[2]

2. Reverse the order of the words now—'*The Gospel of Christ is the Gospel of God.*'—The truth embodied in that statement, if it is not expressed in so many words in the New Testament, is implied in every chapter. It requires to be emphasized at the present day, for various interpretations are being given in our time to the gospel of Christ.

There are some, for instance, who think that the very heart of the gospel consists of the enunciation of an economic principle of society. His name is being acclaimed in many quarters as that of a revolutionary leader. There are others who tell us that the essential and imperishable element in the gospel of Christ is our Lord's precepts with regard to conduct. Everything else is either of a legendary character, the embroidering of human fancy, or of merely transitory significance. There are others, still, who declare that the fundamental thing in the gospel of Christ is the prediction of the consummation of history, and the existing world-order. The main stream of the message of Christ is to be traced in the apocalyptic utterances.

That the teaching of our Lord has direct

[1] Rufus M. Jones, *Pathways to the Reality of God*, 124.
[2] E. Grubb, *The Light of Life*, 21.

bearings on the relations between man and man in society, that it sets up a standard of goodness and lays down principles of duty, that it prophesies in language of the greatest solemnity the coming of a day of judgment, no one acquainted with the facts will dream of disputing. Nevertheless we are right in asserting that the central and supreme subject of the gospel of Christ is God.

This can be established along several lines of proof.

(1) To begin with, our Lord's teaching about individual conduct and social duty furnishes convincing evidence. He never spoke in the character of a moral philosopher simply. The authority which He enlisted to support His words was not the secular interests of society and its members. The sanction under which He announced the principles of ideal action was the Father's Will. He promulgated no ethical doctrine apart from its religious origins. Nor did He expect His teaching to be obeyed except in the case of those who accepted it as a whole, and experienced that relation to the Father on which it was founded.

(2) Again, our Lord's consciousness of Himself makes it plain that the essence of His gospel lay in a revelation of God. His claims were not the arbitrary assertions of a masterful and self-confident mind. They were based on His consciousness of union with the Father. From that consciousness they derived their insistent authority, and in the interests of that consciousness of Himself as the Revealer of the Father they were always advanced.

(3) Once more, the fact of His death has a direct bearing on the question we are considering. The death of Christ can be, and ought to be, studied from a variety of standpoints in order that its wealth of meaning may be laid hold of. The Father's Will was operative in it, and so was the consenting Will of our Lord Himself. But what were the historical causes of Christ's death? The Jewish authorities saw in Him a betrayer of their ancient law and the traditions of the elders. He presumed to amend the precepts which had been handed down from their fathers, and He dared to put a new interpretation on the observance of the Sabbath. His words in condemnation of their behaviour, and of their religious principles and practices, stung them sharply. But what most of all roused their anger was His claim to be the Messiah, Israel's long-expected Redeemer. His assumption of that sacred rôle, His exploiting of the national enthusiasm in that capacity, His dragging down, as they thought, of their most honoured ideals to the mire was more than they could endure. It was nothing short of blasphemy. And so they compelled their Roman masters to arrest Him on a charge of sedition—imputing to Him the very Messianic ideas which He repudiated and they cherished, and His repudiation of which was the cause of their fury against Him. In their own minds they reckoned Him a pestilent person, and 'numbered him with the transgressors.' He was 'a transgressor.' What He transgressed was their narrow, legal, national ideas about God. And He did so by the revelation of Divine Fatherhood and human Brotherhood which His interpretation and fulfilment of the Messianic office announced to them and to the world. He died because of the character of His manifestation of God.

Everyone knows that the word gospel means good news. All good news is gospel, be it news from far or from near, about some success achieved by ourselves or our friends, about the health and welfare of those whose lives are bound up with our own, about the discovery of a remedy for human suffering, about the settlement of an international complication which is menacing the peace of the world. But the news which is good beyond all other news is the gospel. And such news, surely, is news about God, the revelation to us of the grace and glory of the Divine nature. That is the gospel; at least it is so to all who are hungry to know God, whose hearts and consciences, seeking for the greatest of all human experiences, a right relation to God, cry out, 'What must we do to be saved?' The New Testament exists to meet that question, and its answer is, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.' But the answer of the New Testament has no meaning, and does not possess the character of good news, for those who are not mastered by the need of coming into a right relation with God. In the case of such, however, as are haunted by the most urgent of human inquiries, it becomes extraordinarily relevant and intelligible. To them it is glad tidings of great joy, news so good that it won't keep. They feel obliged to

communicate it, and can acknowledge no limit to the obligation. To be without interest in its propagation is to be in complete darkness with regard to its character, and to be a stranger to the wonder of its revelation as the gospel of God.

¶ I shall never forget, during the recent Uniting Conference in London, being introduced to a young and very brilliant doctor who is doing a number of experiments in a laboratory attached to the university. His work is nothing less important than cancer research. At present he is experimenting with mice and his experiments have the backing of some of the most distinguished scientists in London. I watched him at work in a small, ill-ventilated room at the top of the building. Like nearly all researchers he is terribly handicapped for money. Yet I shall never forget the glow in his face, the enthusiasm of his voice, the shining of his eyes, as he tried to make clear to my stumbling lay mind the significance of the experiments he was doing. 'You see,' he said, 'if we can do this and that and the other, if these experiments turn out as successfully as we have a right to hope, then it is possible we may have a new way of treating this particular type of cancer with some hope of recovery. And then,' he said in tones which I cannot reproduce, 'we shall tell the public.' [1]

Lord, I was dumb: I could not speak
The grace and glory of Thy Name;
But now, as touched with living flame,
My lips Thine eager praises wake.

Born of the Seed of David

Rom. i. 1-3.—'The gospel of God, which he promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures, concerning his Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh' (R.V.).

1. It is worth while to inquire what may be the religious importance of the Davidic ancestry of Christ, and how it bears on our doctrine of the Incarnation.

Clearly we must not think of the Advent as an isolated or sudden event, a prodigy launched without warning into human life. The Incarnation is not to be thought of as if the Creator had changed His mind, and was dealing with His universe in a manner uncontemplated in His original purpose. Rather we are to think of the Incarnation as an integral, indeed as *the* integral, element in the Creator's original purpose, a factor which comes into view at its appointed time in history, and marks a definite and crucial phase of the gradual advance of humanity towards its providential consummation. 'When the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law.' In these words St Paul indicates the twofold preparation in history for the supreme self-revelation of the Almighty. On the one hand, the human stock qualified for its sublime mission by a thousand secret forces operating silently through the ages: on the other hand, the human society into which the Incarnate is to be born, a society equipped with a heritage of beliefs, of ideals, of disciplines which had been slowly accumulated through countless generations, and which provided at the appointed time a receptive human soil in which the Divine seed of the gospel might germinate.

The birth of that Son of man in whom the idea of manhood was perfectly expressed, and who was among men on earth as a pure lamp through which the Divine light shone without hindrance, in whom the Eternal Spirit, author of all life, found unhindered entrance, and abiding home, whose manhood is the very sacrament of deity—the birth of Jesus Christ takes its place in the record of history as the outcome and result of a human ancestry.

2. The fact—of which the Davidic ancestry is the impressive affirmation—that the Incarnation was effected in an historical process certifies a truth which we are extremely slow to accept. The ministry of Jesus Christ was fulfilled under frankly normal conditions. The birth of the Son of man was not such as to exclude Him from the family of mankind. He, like the rest of His brethren, was 'born of a woman.' Very early in the history of the Church there appeared Christians who—under the influence, as we may suppose, of a mistaken reverence—denied the reality of the birth of Christ, and, by inevitable consequence, impugned the genuineness of His manhood. The same heresy in later times has expressed itself in the luxuriant growth of unscriptural notions as to the mother of Christ. Her perpetual virginity was soon

[1] Leslie D. Weatherhead, *Discipleship*, 128.

asserted in the teeth of the plain sense of the New Testament; her immaculate conception has been formally incorporated into the doctrine of the Roman Church. The Apostles are wholly free from these unwholesome speculations, and the Early Church, when, in the earliest draft of our Christian faith which we know as the Apostles' Creed, it inserted the clause 'born of the Virgin Mary,' had in mind the condemnation of docetic heresy. The emphasis rests on the word 'born,' just as in the New Testament, where the birth of Christ is named as the proof of His true humanity. The doctrine is explicitly stated in the Epistle to the Hebrews: 'Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same—for verily not of angels doth he take hold, but he taketh hold of the seed of Abraham. Wherefore it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren.'

The contemporaries of Christ, bringing to their reading nothing of the true prophetic insight, were quite unable to accept a frankly normal ministry for the Messiah: they asked for 'signs'; they coveted prodigies; they insisted on a literal fulfilment of national expectations drafted in the terms of a distant past, and coloured by the patriotic ardours of an independent nation. Accordingly, when the Messiah appeared after the fashion which the deeper voices of prophecy had declared, destitute of the recommendations of secular power and pomp, obscure and lowly placed in society, without the prestige of wealth or rank, they could not bring themselves to recognize His claim. 'He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not.'

The familiar hymn expresses the natural expectation of the human mind whenever the Divine action is considered:

> God moves in a mysterious way
> His wonders to perform.

In very truth the mysteriousness lies in the Divine choice of that which is most ordinary. It is the wonder-loving fancy of man that insists on weaving thick veils of marvel, and wrapping in them the movements of the Almighty. He works with the simplicity of omnipotence, and the strong liberty of unfaltering law.

We have to learn the Divineness of the ordinary, the sanctity of the commonplace. It is the very lesson of the Incarnation. 'This is the sign unto you: ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger.' Silently the event to which all history had been moving happened, and men heeded not the coming of the King. Yet beneath the silence we can discern the involuntary hush of a great expectation.

¶ Mrs Thirkell says that Burne-Jones, her grandfather, put one of his beautiful windows with the Holy Grail over the sink where the scullery maid washed up. That was a lovely thing to do. And it was what God did when Jesus was born in a stable to parents like Joseph the carpenter and Mary his wife. He accepted the ordinary and glorified it.[1]

3. The fact that the Incarnation was effected in history, effected in the normal working of the Divine providence, casts a light not only on the past but also on the present and on the future. For the same Divine law holds still in human affairs; they are still inspired by the purpose of God, and are moving towards the fulfilment of that purpose in the time appointed. However chaotic and depressing the aspect of human affairs may at any time be, we are permitted to believe that the ultimately prevailing force is that of the Divine will, bending to its own service even the unlikeliest materials, and carrying out through the ages its beneficent designs. The Incarnation draws in its train an optimistic reading of all history, present and future as well as past. For it assures us that God is no Epicurean Divinity careless of human fate, but a loving Father tenderly interested in the concerns of His creatures, and bending to the service of their ultimate good the strange vagaries of human experience. He 'rejoices in his habitable earth; and his delight is with the sons of men.'

If we really believe in the Incarnation, then we are committed to the old standpoint of the Hebrew prophets when we in our turn consider the course of human affairs. History is not a chaos either in the past or in the present; it is an economy or providential scheme. God works in history through the agency of men, and at every turn they are being called upon to serve His designs. Hence the greatness, and hence

[1] T. Tudor Rhys.

also the solemnity, of human life. Just because manhood is competent for the highest task of all—the expression of the Divine mind and the service of the Divine will—and this competence is actually demonstrated in the crowning example of Jesus Christ, so is the guilt and tragedy of human failure correspondingly great. Let us, then, seek specially the grace to think worthily of this manhood which we share with the Incarnate, and to treat it responsibly. Let us take the spirit of Christ into the relationships of our life, and bring upon the common things of home and business the consecrating purpose which was revealed in Him, and which assuredly we are commissioned to acknowledge and serve.

¶ In the Roman Catholic Church they celebrate a daily mass, which represents the perpetual offering to God of our Lord's holy sacrifice. It has its beautiful meaning, that mass, but is there not a better? A daily mass, indeed—the Spirit of Jesus so ruling in our bodily life that it is offered unto God by Him daily. It is by this sign we conquer—'a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger'—a body broken on a cross, the Spirit still victorious—the Word of God made *flesh* and lifting our humanity hour by hour to the right hand of God, for His holy uses, for His great redeeming purpose. This is the true Catholic mass, the redemption of our common daily life.[1]

The Witness of the Resurrection

Rom. i. 4.—'Declared to be the Son of God with power . . . by the resurrection of the dead' (R.V.).

St Paul's writings, and especially this Epistle, are the transcript of his life's experience. His gospel is an interpretation of the significance of the life and work of Jesus based upon the revelation to him of the risen Christ. He had seen Jesus on the road to Damascus, and it was that appearance which revolutionized his life, turned him from a persecutor into a disciple, and united him with the Apostles as a witness of the Resurrection. To them all the resurrection of Jesus was first of all an historical fact appreciated chiefly in its bearing on Him. But by degrees they realized that this transcendent fact carried in itself a revelation of what would become the experience of all His followers beyond the grave, and a symbol of the present life possible for them. All three of these aspects are plainly declared in Paul's writings, but here it is chiefly the first which is made prominent. All that distinguishes Christianity, and makes it mighty and worth believing is inseparably connected with the Resurrection.

1. *The Resurrection declares Christ's Divine Sonship.*—It is God's solemn 'Amen' to the tremendous claims which Christ had made. The fact of His Resurrection, indeed, would not declare His Divinity; but the resurrection of One who had spoken such words does. If the Cross and a nameless grave had been the end, what a *reductio ad absurdum* that would have been to the claims of Jesus to have ever been with the Father and to be doing always the things that pleased Him. The Resurrection is God's last and loudest proclamation, 'This is my beloved Son: hear ye him.' The Psalmist of old had learned to trust that his sonship and consecration to the Father made it impossible that that Father should leave his soul in Sheol, or suffer one who was knit to Him by such sacred bonds to see corruption; and the unique Sonship and perfect self-consecration of Jesus went down into the grave in the assured confidence, as He Himself declared, that the third day He would rise again. The old alternative seems to retain all its sharp points: either Christ rose again from the dead, or His claims are a series of blasphemous arrogances and His character irremediably stained.

But we may also remember that Scripture represents Christ's Resurrection not only as a Divine act but also as the act of Christ's own power. In His earthly life He asserted that His relation both to physical death and to resurrection was an entirely unique one. 'I have power,' said He, 'to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again'; and yet, even in this tremendous instance of self-assertion, He remains the obedient Son, for He goes on to say, 'This commandment have I received of my Father.' If, then, Jesus could strip off His earthly life and resume it, obviously it was not a life like other men's. The whole phenomenon is supernatural, and we shall not be in the true position to understand and appreciate it and Him until, like the doubting Thomas, we fall at the feet of the risen Son, and breathe out loyalty

[1] A. D. Belden, *Does God really Care?* 102.

and worship in that rapturous exclamation, 'My Lord and my God.'

¶ He is the Son of God; but how is that to be demonstrated? You point me to the carpenter as He walks along with His bag of tools, and you say, 'That is the Son of God.' I may say, 'I believe it,' but my heart sighs, 'Oh that it were demonstrated!' You point me to a man sitting tired out upon the well of Samaria, and you say, 'That is the Son of God.' I believe it, but my heart is still saying, 'Oh, I wish that He could be determined to be such!' I want a more powerful argument that will at once set the matter beyond doubt. The Holy Ghost says that you have it in His resurrection from the dead. I see Him there on the Cross, and, in uttermost weakness, He bows His head and dies. It is really blood that gathers in a pool at the foot of that Cross. Son of David, Thou hast died! But stand by that open grave on the third morning. Now, guards, arrest Him! What, Romans, will you allow the stone to be rolled back? Why do you not put your hand, in the name of the imperial Cæsar, upon the arm of that lone man as He comes forth from that sepulchre? Lay hold upon Him! No, those guards are as dead men upon the ground. Christ staked everything upon this—'I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again'; and He has taken it again. He has come up and out from among the dead, and the Resurrection thunders forth, 'According to the flesh He is of the seed of David, but according to the spirit of holiness He is the Son of God.'[1]

2. *The Resurrection interprets Christ's Death.*—There is no more striking contrast than that between the absolute non-receptivity of the disciples in regard to all Christ's plain teachings about His death and their clear perception after Pentecost of the mighty power that lay in it. The very fact that they continued disciples at all, and that there continued to be such a community as the Church, demands their belief in the Resurrection as the only cause which can account for it. If He did not rise from the dead, and if His followers did not know that He did so by the plainest teachings of common sense, they ought to have scattered, and borne in isolated hearts the bitter memories of disappointed hopes; for if He lay in a nameless grave, and they were not sure that He was risen from the dead, His death would have been a conclusive showing up of the falsity of His claims. If the death of Christ was not followed by His Resurrection and Ascension, the whole fabric of Christianity falls to pieces. As the Apostle puts it in his great chapter on resurrection, 'Ye are yet in your sins.' The forgiveness which the gospel extends to men does not depend on the mercy of God or on the mere penitence of man, but upon the offering of the one sacrifice for sins in His death, which is justified by His Resurrection as being accepted by God. If we cannot triumphantly proclaim 'Christ is risen indeed,' we have nothing worth preaching.

We are sometimes told that the ethics of Christianity are its vital centre, which will stand out more plainly when purified from these mystical doctrines of a Death as the sin-offering for the world, and a Resurrection as the great token that that offering avails. Paul did not think so. To him the morality of the gospel was all deduced from the life of Christ the Son of God as our Example, and from His death for us, which touches men's hearts and makes obedience to Him our joyful answer to what He has done for us. Christianity is a new thing in the world, not as moral teaching, but as moral power to obey that teaching, and that depends on the Cross interpreted by the Resurrection. If we have only a dead Christ we have not a living Christianity.

> He who for men their surety stood,
> And pour'd on earth his precious blood,
> Pursues in heav'n his mighty plan,
> The Saviour and the friend of man.
>
> . . . . .
>
> With boldness, therefore, at the throne,
> Let us make all our sorrows known;
> And ask the aids of heav'nly power
> To help us in the evil hour.[1]

3. *The Resurrection of Christ is the type of other resurrections.* We should notice that the phrase used by the Apostle is not 'Resurrection from the dead,' but 'Resurrection of the dead,' because in Him the general hope of mankind received a first fulfilment. Others had been raised by prophets of old, and by Christ Himself, but only to die again. 'Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more.'

[1] A. G. Brown.

[1] Paraphrase lviii.

The Resurrection of Jesus carried all other resurrections with it. It is not simply the Resurrection of Jesus Christ by Himself; He rose as the first-fruits of an innumerable company. Not only did Christ rise, but *He is the resurrection*; and in His Resurrection His redeemed ones shall rise. Paul here takes a view right into the far distance; and when he says, 'declared to be the Son of God with power,' he does not simply say, 'by his own resurrection'; but 'declared to be so by the resurrection'; that is, by His own resurrection first, and by the opening up of every grave hereafter. So we bow to Jesus and we worship Him as very God.

¶ There is a picture you will find in many galleries of the Crucifixion of Christ. It was first a fine painting, then reduced by the art of engraving to a first-class steel plate. It represents the three crosses, the dark heavens, the rent rocks, and, in the foreground, saints moving out of their graves and walking towards the Holy City. The unfortunate thing is that the artist overlooked the statement of Matthew, who says, 'The rocks were rent, the graves were opened, and many of the bodies of the saints which slept, arose and came out of their graves *after his resurrection*.' Christ's Resurrection is the first-fruits of ours, for it antedates all other resurrections.

Equipment and Work

Rom. i. 5.—'Through whom we received grace and apostleship, unto obedience of faith among all the nations, for his name's sake' (R.V.).

In this verse St Paul sets forth his reasons for wanting to come to Rome. Rome was, so to speak, in his commission. When Jesus called him He also gave him his work. He was to be His Apostle to the Gentiles, and Paul did not feel that commission would be fulfilled until he had preached the gospel in the metropolis. So he was 'ready,' as he says a little lower down—only that word 'ready' is scarcely emphatic enough, 'eager' would come nearer to the meaning of the Greek—he was 'eager' to preach his gospel 'to you also that are in Rome.'

Four things are in the text: (1) The Apostle's equipment—he had received 'grace.' (2) The Apostle's commission—he had received grace 'and apostleship.' (3) The Apostle's sphere—his apostleship was to be exercised 'among all nations.' (4) The Apostle's motive: 'for his name's sake.'

1. *The Apostle's Equipment.*—He had received 'grace' through Jesus Christ. The word 'grace' in its primal sense means God's free, unmerited, unearned favour. 'Grace' is love—but love with a special connotation. It is love that stoops; that lavishes itself on the undeserving. And so in the New Testament it comes to stand for the love which God bestows upon man, for there was nothing in man to call forth and deserve the love of the holy God. Love is usually evoked—by something lovable in the loved one, be it beauty of face or form, or sweetness of disposition. That is how the dictionary defines love: 'a feeling of strong affection called forth by that which delights and commands admiration.' It is a poor sort of definition, inadequate even as a definition of human love. The element of truth there is in it is the suggestion that our human love always partakes of the nature of response. Love answers love. But the marvel of the love of God is this—it did not wait till there was something lovable in man before it bestowed itself. 'God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.' And that sacrificial, redeeming love which lavishes itself on sinful and undeserving man is 'grace.'

And this 'grace' reveals itself in mercy and forgiveness. Forgiveness without money and without price so far as we are concerned, but not without measureless sacrifice and cost to God! That infinite cost is hinted at in the text. It was through Jesus Christ that the assurance of God's mercy and pardon had come to Paul. Through the self-emptying of the Incarnation, through the humiliation of the lowly birth, through the struggle of the Temptation, through the labours and disappointments of His preaching years, but, above all, by His Cross and Passion, by His precious death and burial and by His glorious Resurrection, did 'grace' become available for Paul and for all men.

We cannot understand Paul unless we start with 'grace.' He had known in his own heart and life this stooping love of God which revealed itself in forgiveness. Forgiveness, reconciliation with God, had been the boon which Paul

most fiercely craved. There is no other word for it; he craved it 'fiercely,' with all the intensity of his deep and strong nature. He had groaned beneath the sense of his sin and been wellnigh heart-broken by it. He had tried to earn forgiveness, to gain a righteousness of his own which should be able to claim God's favour as its due. And he had failed—miserably and utterly failed. 'Wretched man that I am' was his heart-broken cry, 'who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' And then he had, with a wonder which the years never dimmed, found forgiveness, deliverance, peace of heart, in this free redeeming grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ. And this 'grace' which had brought him this blessed freedom, this sense of being right with God, became the subject of his message. That was the good news which he carried from one end of the known world to the other. And he preached it out of his own experience: 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.'

¶ If Paul had been asked, as Sir James Simpson, the great Edinburgh physician, was asked, what was the greatest and most welcome discovery of his whole life, he would have answered, as that great doctor answered, 'The discovery that I have a Saviour.'

Grace is the very heart and substance of the Christian message, and no one can preach the gospel of grace effectively if he has not had some experience of it himself. He may be able to preach what people call the 'social gospel'; he may be able to preach the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount; he may be able to speak of Jesus as Ideal and Example. But the mighty apostolic gospel of the forgiveness of sin through the grace of God in Christ will be beyond him. And if he cannot preach *that*, he is missing the distinctive Christian message which our stricken world most deeply needs and yearns to hear.

2. *The Apostle's Commission.*—He had received 'grace through Christ and apostleship.' No doubt by 'apostleship' here Paul means that the Risen Lord added him, as one born out of due time, to those whom He had chosen to be His apostles in the days of His flesh. In that sense Paul's apostleship, like that of the Twelve, was unique. But 'apostleship' has also a much wider meaning than the technical one of membership in the Apostolic circle. What does the word 'apostle' really mean? It means 'one who is sent.' 'Apostle' is exactly the same word as 'missionary,' only one word has come to us through the Greek while the other has come to us through the Latin. When Jesus called, out of the whole mass of His followers, those twelve men to form a kind of inner circle this is what the Evangelist Mark says about the purpose Jesus had in His mind. He called the Twelve 'that they might be with him and that he might send them forth to preach.' He called them to be disciples in order that they might become apostles. And in exactly the same way Paul received grace, and *apostleship*. First of all, the personal experience of God's redeeming love, and then the duty of going forth to tell the good news to others. And how nobly Paul discharged his commission the pages of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles plainly show. The word was like a fire in his bones. He was in journeyings often, in labour and travail, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness, in his devotion to his task. Paul was possessed with the passion to share, and so, in his eagerness to fulfil his apostleship, he wanted to extend his ministry to Rome and far-off Spain.

In a very real sense that same commission is entrusted to all Christian people. We have received our own experience of grace in order that we may share it. 'Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.' Grace and apostleship—the two things always go together. No man receives the one without having the other laid upon him as a duty. No man receives the blessed experience of the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God without having put upon him the obligation of telling others what great things God hath done for his soul. That was how the Christian faith was meant to spread—by every disciple becoming an apostle. That is how it *did* spread in the early years. That is how it spreads still.

¶ Dr Frank Buchman, founder of the Oxford Group Movement, gives the following account of an early experience. 'I was staying with some friends who had lately been worldlings but had been changed. They had a son who was not like-minded, a fresher at Cambridge, and now thoroughly bored with the Convention meetings. The family were puzzled to know how to interest him in Christianity. He came in to tea, and I began to share my wonderful

experience and tell how a rapturous joy had come in place of the ill-will I previously harboured with such inhibiting results. I said that all my old cares had been dropped overboard. The young man was immediately interested. How had it all happened? Would I walk with him round Derwentwater and talk further about it? Before we returned he, too, decided to make the surrender of his will to Christ's will.'[1]

3. *The Sphere.*—He received grace and apostleship . . . 'among all nations.' He was sent to all nations to preach his wonderful gospel of grace. There was nothing local or partial or merely national about the good news he had to proclaim. It was for all men. The universal note runs all through the New Testament. Christ left no land or nation to any other prophet or religious leader. He died to make all the world His own. All nations! 'Only let the Church cease to struggle for its own life,' said Principal Martin not long since, 'and begin instead to struggle for the life of the world, and its own life will be secure.'

¶ The Sea of Galilee, which takes in the pure fresh water from the snows of Lebanon, remains always fresh and sweet with the flowers of the field covering its rising banks, because it always passes on the water it receives. But the Dead Sea, which receives the same water that has flowed through the Sea of Galilee, turns the pure fresh water into salt water so full of brine that on its banks nothing can grow at all. It is a Dead Sea because it takes in but never gives out.[2]

4. *The Motive.*—'For his name's sake.' Why did the Apostle go on with his preaching in spite of the stones at Lystra and the scourging at Philippi and the fighting with wild beasts at Ephesus? Well, he went on with it because he couldn't help it. He went on with it because he could do no other. That was what he said himself: 'Necessity is laid upon me.' And the necessity was at least twofold—the urgent need of men and the love he bore his Lord. And principally and especially this latter. 'The love of Christ,' he said, 'constraineth me.' He knew Christ wanted the world; and he loved Christ so dearly that he was willing to dare and suffer anything and everything so that his beloved Lord might have His heart's desire. He was ready, he declared, not to be bound only, but also to die for the name of the Lord Jesus.

There are many motives impelling us to our modern apostleship. The need of men is dire and urgent. This gospel of ours is the one and only remedy adequate for the world's woe. But the motive that is going to make us equal to our task, that is going to keep us steadfast and unmovable in times of difficulty and disappointment, is just this—'for his name's sake.' This devotion to the Person of our Lord is the only adequate dynamic for Christian service. That was the one and only question our Lord put to the penitent Peter—'Lovest thou me?' With a real love in his heart Peter was equal to the task of feeding the lambs and tending the sheep. The best work in the world is the work that is done for love's sake. That was what Gustave Doré said to a friend who was admiring a painting of Jesus that stood upon his easel. 'Ah,' he said, 'I should have painted Him much better if I had loved Him more.' Service uninspired by love may be listless, half-hearted, ineffective. But service born of a great love will be marked by zeal and passion and power. And perhaps that is what the Church needs for a recovery of its power—a revival of its love for Christ.

¶ In his last public address, spoken to his beloved miners in Durham Cathedral, Bishop Westcott said: 'I have sought to tell you what I have found in a long and laborious life to be the most prevailing power to sustain right endeavour, however imperfectly I have yielded myself to it—even the love of Christ; to tell you what I know to be the secret of a noble life, even glad obedience to His will. I have given you a watchword which is fitted to be the inspiration, the test, and the support of untiring service to God and man: *the love of Christ constraineth us.*'

[1] A. J. Russell, *For Sinners Only*, 59.
[2] C. F. Andrews, *Sadhu Sundar Singh.*

Saints of To-day

Rom. i. 7.—'Beloved of God, called to be saints.'

This is Paul's description of the Church at Rome, the address upon his letter. The address upon a letter naturally consists of something which will guide the bearer to those for whom it is meant; it gives their names, or their business, or the place at which they live. Probably the

bearer of this letter to Rome would have to seek out its recipients in the Jewish quarter; for though the Church was mainly Gentile, like every primitive Church it originated among the Jews, and only by degrees became quite independent of them. The Jewish quarter was poor and squalid, and even among its poor and squalid inhabitants the Christians held an inconspicuous place. When Paul came to Rome himself a few years later the representatives of his people either knew nothing or affected to know nothing of the new sect except that it was everywhere spoken against. But to Paul its external circumstances and its repute in the world were nothing; to him it consisted of persons who could be addressed in this wonderful style, 'Beloved of God, called to be saints.' Beloved of God—what a rock to lean upon! Called to be saints—what a height to aspire to!

It is chiefly the second that we are to consider—our calling to be saints. But we must remember that it *is* the second, and that it depends upon the first. It is as the objects and possessors of God's love that we are called with so high a calling. If we stood alone and unsupported in the world we should not dare to lift our eyes or our hearts so high. But the gospel has come to us, and the very meaning of the gospel is that we are not alone in the world. God is here, Christ is here, the gift of the Holy Spirit is here, and they are all here for us, bringing into our hearts the assurance of the redeeming love of God. Out of the darkness, confusion, weakness, and despair that overlay our life something begins to shine clear, steady, hopeful, inspiring, something which is as incredible at first as the love of God, yet which may fill us at last with as deep and grateful a joy—our high calling in Christ Jesus. This is what the love of God makes possible for us and puts within our reach. Those who know that they are God's beloved know also that in consequence of being so they are called to be saints. To be saints is not now a dream or a madness; with the love of God beneath us it is our calling. In other words, it is at once a clear duty and a sure and glorious hope.

1. What is meant by *saints*? It is easy to answer the question formally. In Scripture this means people belonging to God. When Paul speaks of Christians as called to be saints, he means that they are called to be His. The negative side of the idea is, 'Ye are not your own'; the positive side of it is, 'You are God's, you are *His* people, His representatives in the world.' In the great city to which this letter was sent there were men to be found representing the most diverse interests—pleasure, business, literature, art, science, law, government; but amidst its thronging myriads the Apostle's heart was pledged to the little company which represented, however unworthily, the cause and interest of God the Redeemer. It is they who are in his mind when he says, 'called to be saints.'

2. If we ask how we are to aim at carrying out our calling to be God's people, it is part of its very greatness that there is no short and easy answer. Of course we can say that *God's* people must in some way or other be recognizedly and even separately His. But if we ask in what way, we find that any definite answer invariably breaks down at some point. This element of separateness has expressed itself in two historic forms. There was the separation of monasticism, which led men to withdraw themselves from the world and in some quiet place give themselves to the cultivation of a state of mind. And the world owes something to monasticism, for in barren ages of the spirit it kept alive the realities of religion, and did great service in the preservation and translation of the Scriptures. Then there was the separation of the Puritan which surrounded life with negations, and made the Sabbath a day of gloom.

Both these forms of separation have largely passed from the thought of men. A better appreciation of the Humanity of Jesus, never to be forgotten in emphasis upon His Divinity, has done much to this end. The modern saint is a man among men; he is interested in the whole of life; his thought that of a devout Frenchman who said, 'Beware of a religion which substitutes itself for everything—that makes monks. Seek a religion which penetrates everything'—everything human a point of contact with the eternal—'that makes Christians.' Saintliness is not produced by separation from the world. All the separation which is required will be apparent in lives in which the love of God is the supreme motive.

¶ Protestantism, it has often been said, cannot grow saints; and if there are no saints,

save of the ascetic or monastic sort, the gibe is just. But if saints are not so much men and women living cloistered lives, screened from the small prosaic worries which fret us all, but rather, as a great Manchester preacher once said, 'men and women who, amidst the whirr of the spindle in the mill, and the clink of the scales on the counter, and the hubbub of the market-place, and the jangle of the courts, are yet living lives of conscious devotion to God,' then he of whom I am writing [Chudleigh] has his place among the saints of God.[1]

3. The life of the saint is one in which perfect freedom and full responsibility are combined. There is no law laid down for the saint beforehand: there is no such thing as statutory obedience in his life, whether the statutes be conceived as Divine or as human. Under God, or rather under the consciousness of the redeeming love of God, and of all it has done for him, the saint is a law to himself. Remember that other expression: 'beloved of God.' The whole of Christianity, all that is meant by the calling to be a saint, is in that; but everybody has to find out what it involves for himself, in the peculiar relations and conditions of his own life. He has to say to himself, 'Here I stand, encompassed by the love of God—not my own, but His. Here I stand, believing that my life is dear to Him, and that through it His will and purpose are to be fulfilled in the world. It is out of this conviction, out of the sense of obligation involved here, that my whole life must flow, spontaneously, yet with a necessity leaving me no alternative. In one word, what makes the saint is responsibility freely faced in the sense of the love of God. Naturally we shrink from responsibility. Either we are self-willed, which virtually means that we deny that there is such a thing as responsibility, or we are timid, and glad to have someone relieve us of it by telling us what our duty is. The Romanist can put it on his spiritual director; the Protestant can evade it by being conventional, and doing what other people do; but it is impossible to fulfil the calling of the saint on such cheap terms. We must face our circumstances—which for us are the world—and we must decide on our own responsibility what we have to do or to abstain from doing, what we have to resign or to keep, if we would abide in the love of God, and prove ourselves not our own, but His. In truth, there is no difference in this respect between a man and a saint. It is responsibility that makes a man; and the saint is just a man who takes the whole of life's responsibilities upon his conscience—*as one beloved of God.*

[1] George Jackson, in *The Manchester Guardian.*

4. The life of the saint is also morally effective. It is just at this point that the modern saint has so often lost his power, and that the religion it is his business to make real to men has seemed to break down. Somehow the qualities men associate with him are the negative qualities. He is notable for the things he does not do. And when in some great issue between right and wrong, between the way of self and the way of service, the call for courageous leadership and constructive effort is sounded, his has not always been the quick response.

¶ 'Sinners were with me; saints were against me—strange contradiction in human nature'—this is a pathetic entry in the diary of the philanthropist, Lord Shaftesbury, as he tells of his efforts to improve the condition of the factory workers in England.

Mere goodness without effectiveness, if such a thing be possible, is failure. And so the modern saint will not only be a man among men, pre-eminently he will be a man among men for men. To him the spirit of Jesus will be the rule of life, the programme of Jesus—'I am come that they might have life and have it more abundantly,' the supreme business of life. In the world's work he will be, if need be, a stern fighter for righteousness.

¶ Holiness is whole-ness, and whole-ness is usableness. Any holiness or any pursuit of holiness which merely begins and ends with myself, in which I merely seek for an experience of ecstasy, joy, unbroken peace, and the like, which has no issue in sacrifice and service for the salvation and blessing of others, is little more than refined selfishness, and has absolutely nothing in common with the holy life to which God summons His people in Christ Jesus when He calls them to be saints.[1]

5. Nothing shows more curiously how far the common Christian mind has lapsed from the New Testament than the expression we some-

[1] J. S. Holden, *Supposition and Certainty*, 130.

times hear, 'Of course, I don't pretend to be a saint.' A Christian should not pretend anything; but surely Christians are *called* to be saints, and are bound to take their calling seriously. But sometimes special causes discourage us from taking our calling to be saints with seriousness and hope. There is the past which we can never forget, which haunts us with shame. Yes, but God knows it better than we, and yet His love has come to us in Christ, and there is nothing too hard for it to deal with. There is the ever-present sin which still defeats us—which surprises and humbles us. But to speak truly, is it not when we look away from God's love that we fall? Then there is the discouraging wisdom of this world. It is needless and hopeless (it tells us) to aim so high; you must be sensible; you must remember what human nature is both in yourself and in other people, and not expect too much from it. To be a saint may be a calling in the New Testament, but it is not a calling in the streets of a modern city, and the less lofty your language, the less absurd you will appear. Of course those who do not believe in God and His love cannot speak in any other strain. All we need say of this worldly wisdom may be said in the Apostle's word: 'This persuasion cometh not of him who *calleth* you.'

To be the people of God in the world is for those who are so called to it not only a duty but a hope. It is a thing to lift up our hearts to with humility, assurance, and joy. And when we are discouraged by the remembrance of what we have been or what we are, let us remember that it is not on this our calling rests; it rests on the solemn and wonderful truth that we are beloved of God.

Minister and People

Rom. i. 11, 12.—'For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.'

'I LONG to see you,' Paul writes to the Christians at Rome, 'that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established.' Then he checks and corrects himself. It is as if he had said, 'No, that is not quite what I mean. The giving is not to be all on one side. You are to give as well as I; I am to receive as well as you.' 'That is,' he goes on, 'that I with you may be comforted in you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine.' In other words, the very essence of the pastoral relation is in its mutual character. And just as, when there is a heavy load to be lifted, the two hands co-operate, each supplying what the other lacks, so minister and people have each their share in a task which God has committed to both.

1. 'I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift'—there is the task of the minister, to be fulfilled mainly, though of course not wholly, through preaching. The authority committed by the bishop in the ordination of an Anglican priest is first, 'authority to preach the Word of God.' Dr Alexander Whyte liked to tell of the old Puritan divine who wrote in all his books, first, his name, 'William Perkins,' and then underneath, 'Thou art a minister of the Word; *mind thy business*.' We are not forgetting the various forms of service of which the Church to-day has need, but, speaking generally, the preacher who can do anything else better than he can preach is in his wrong place; he should be doing that other thing that he can do better. He may be famous for his schemes, for his books, for his politics, or for anything that is his, but if in his preaching the hungry can find no food, and the sorrowing no comfort, he is of all men surely the most to be pitied.

What the Apostle wanted to give these people was a firmer grasp and fuller possession of Jesus Christ, His love and power, which would secure a deepening and strengthening of their whole Christian life. He was quite sure he had this to give, and that he could impart it, if they would listen to what he would say. But while thus he rises into the lofty conception of the purpose and possible result of his meeting the Roman Christians, he is just as conscious of the limitations of his power in the matter as he is of the greatness of his function. These are indicated plainly. The word which he employs here, 'gift,' is never used in the New Testament for a thing that one man can give to another, but is always employed for the concrete results of the grace of God bestowed upon men. The very expression, then, shows that Paul thought of himself not as the original giver, but simply as a channel through which was communicated what God had given. Notice, too, as bearing on the limits of Paul's part in the gift, the delicacy of the language in his statement of the

ultimate purpose of the gift. He does not say 'that I may strengthen you,' which might have sounded too egotistical, and would have assumed too much to himself, but 'that ye may be strengthened,' for the true strengthener is not Paul, but the Spirit of God.

2. 'That I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.' If the Apostle's language were not so transparently sincere, and springing from deep interest in the relationship between himself and these people, we should say that it was exquisite courtesy. But it moves in a region far more real than the region of courtesy, and it speaks the inmost truth about the conditions on which the Roman Christians should receive—namely, that they should also give. There is only one Giver who who is only a Giver, and that is God. Paul desired to see his Roman brethren that he might be encouraged; and when he did see them, as he marched along the Appian Way, a shipwrecked prisoner, the Acts of the Apostles tells us, 'he thanked God and took courage.'

Many a preacher could tell how his pulpit is a kind of telephone exchange, at which multitudes of invisible wires converge from every part of the church; *and the messages do not all go from one end.* The preacher receives even while he is giving; and what he gives depends in no small degree upon what he receives. At one time the word in him is given free course by the sight of a few eager, responsive worshippers; at another it is checked and thrown back upon him by the cold listless stare, the drowsy indifference, of the faces before him. Once when the famous Methodist, Dr Watkinson, was about to begin his sermon the lights were suddenly lowered. The preacher protested: 'I can't see my notes,' he said. When the lights were turned on again, waving his hand to the congregation, he said, with a smile, 'You are my notes.' The little parable admits of a much wider interpretation than most congregations realise.

¶ When Silvester Horne was ordained pastor of the Allen Street Congregational Church, London, Dr Dale preached the ordination sermon and took for his subject, 'The Congregation Helping the Minister.' People often forget, he said, that it takes two to make an effective sermon—the preacher and the hearer. 'A few years ago,' he went on, 'after a minister had been preaching in a Wesleyan chapel not far from my house, one of the older officials of the circuit began to talk to him of the glories of a past generation, and said with some fervour, "Ah, sir, there were great preachers in those days." "Yes," was the reply of the minister, who perhaps felt just a touch of human irritation, "yes, and there were great hearers in those days."'

Milton complained in a familiar line that in his day the hungry sheep looked up and were not fed. But what if the sheep do not look up? What if there is no spiritual hunger? It is hard work trying to light a fire on the top of an iceberg. Even Jesus Himself was once made helpless through man's unbelief. He knew the hampering and the restrictions of His power which came from being surrounded by a chill, unsympathetic environment. Is it not for the congregation to help to create the atmosphere in which alone is possible the only kind of preaching which is ever worth calling great?

3. 'That I may be comforted together with you.' St Paul's word is 'encouraged' rather than 'comforted.' He and they were comrades in the same holy war, and if they are to win, he tells them, they must stand by each other's side and hold each other up. The saying reminds us of the brief word of commendation spoken of three of his faithful fellow-labourers: 'Men that have been a comfort'—or, as perhaps we might render it (the term is a medical one), a cordial—'unto me.' There are times in the lives of all Christ's servants when just such a service is their greatest need. Why is it that we are so slow to speak the word that fainting souls are athirst to hear? Dr Dale tells how once in an evil mood of despondency he was passing along one of the streets of Birmingham, when a poor but decently dressed woman, laden with parcels, stopped him and said, 'God bless you, Dr Dale!' 'Her face was unknown to me. I said, "Thank you, but what is your name?" "Never mind my name," she answered; "but if you could only know how you have made me feel hundreds of times, and what a happy home you have given me! God bless you!" The mist broke, the sunlight came, I breathed the free air of the mountains of God.'

¶ In her *Life and Letters of Robert Browning* Mrs Sutherland Orr writes: 'Carlyle had never

rendered him [Browning] that service, easy as it appears, which one man of letters most justly values from another: that of proclaiming the admiration which he privately expressed for his works. The fact was incomprehensible to Mr Browning—it was so foreign to his own nature; and he commented on it with a touch, though merely a touch, of bitterness, when repeating to a friend some almost extravagant eulogium which in earlier days he had received from him *tête-à-tête*. "If only," he said, "those words had been ever repeated in public, what good they might have done me!"'

Let us join the glorious company of encouragers. Life is sometimes grey and disappointing for those on whom great tasks are laid. It is not for us to stand in their place and bear their burdens. But this at least we can do—we can bid them be of good cheer, we can hearten them for their work, we can make the light of God to break through the mists of their doubt and fear. Shall we not join ourselves anew in one holy league of mutual helpfulness and prayer that each of us may be comforted by the other's faith, both theirs and ours?

Debtorship

Rom. i. 14.—'I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.'

We have here one of those lightning flashes into the inner mind of the Apostle Paul that gives us the secret of his missionary enthusiasm. Like so many of his characteristic sayings, it is put into the form of a paradox. The form of it is puzzling, and the meaning at first eludes us. It is difficult to realize in what sense he could confess himself indebted to Greeks and Barbarians. If he had said that he was debtor to his own countrymen there would be no difficulty in understanding what he meant, for every man owes more than he can ever repay to the people from whom he has sprung, and to the land of his birth; nor is there any doubt whatever that Paul realized this debt to the full. But here he makes out that he lies under some deep fundamental obligation to the whole world—to all nations (for to a Jew Greeks and Barbarians meant everybody except his own nation) and to every grade of culture, 'wise and unwise.' And if we had asked him what these other people had done for him, he would at once have answered—nothing. He had suffered many things at their hands, but he had received no benefits from them. None the less, the words of the text represent his deepest mind. His life was spent in endeavouring to discharge a debt so overmastering and imperative that he could never hope to overtake it. It was this that constituted his call to be the Apostle to the Gentiles—the great missionary Apostle; and it is this that explains the tireless energy, the unbounded devotion, the unquenchable ardour which drove him from one land and city to another, preaching to all and sundry the 'unsearchable riches of Christ.' And when we have penetrated behind the outer form and husk of this saying to its inner meaning we shall find not only the key to the life of St Paul, the missionary, but the master-motive of all true missionary effort in every age and land.

1. That motive is briefly and centrally this—the gospel is God's gift to us, His free and royal gift; and we can only repay Him by passing on that gift to others. 'Freely we have received it' from Him, 'freely let us give' it to those who have it not.

Paul owed much to Christ. Christ meant for him reconciliation to God, restoration to sonship, illumination on life, a transformation of ideals and character and conduct. Christ meant peace and power and joy, the goal of personality, the prize of his high calling. 'Life means Christ to me,' he glowingly writes, when sharing his experience with his beloved Philippian converts. This Christ of unspeakable blessing Paul cannot keep to himself. He must be shared. His *debt* to Christ became a *duty* to others. He would let all men know what was the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of God's forgiving, redemptive love and grace in Jesus Christ.

There are other missionary motives, but this is the central and abiding motive—one that never fails, one that is adequate to the task, one that can never lose its urgency and power. In proportion as we realize the value and the glory of the gospel for ourselves, only so shall we be driven to pass it on to others who have it not. What is good for us, what brings us the forgiveness of our sins and power to sin

no more, must be good for every man; and those who know what it has done for them are bound to pass it on to all mankind. It is a debt of honour.

¶ Dr John Watson once told a gathering of ministers of a visit he paid when on holiday to a little country chapel. The pulpit was occupied by a lay preacher. In the course of his sermon the preacher asked and answered such questions as these: 'Why do I walk miles Sunday after Sunday to preach the gospel? Why do I face all weathers, tramp along through mud and snow, battle against rain and storm to preach in this and other pulpits? Why? Because I cannot eat my bread alone.'

2. In our business relations we must all pay our debts to those to whom they have been incurred, and the law is strict and cogent which demands that we should do this under penalties that are swift and sure. That is the central law of industrial and commercial life. It is the basis of all our business transactions.

But as soon as we pass from the world of commodities to the world of spiritual benefits, we are met by the fact that this direct interchange of benefits speedily becomes impossible. Only in the smallest matters can we repay one another what we owe. How, for instance, can we repay the social and intellectual and spiritual benefits which we owe to former ages? The great thinkers who have enriched our minds, the great reformers who laid down the foundations of our liberties, the great saints and martyrs, prophets and preachers who have passed on to us the inspiration of their example and the glow of their faith—these have long since passed beyond the reach of our gratitude: we can only recognize the fact of our obligation to them, and erect tardy monuments to their memory. They toiled for ends they never saw, and died for causes in whose victory they never shared, and we have entered into their inheritance. How, then, shall we prove our gratitude to them?

But it is not only to past ages we cannot pay our debts. We cannot repay a tithe of what we owe to those whom we have known in the flesh. Who of us, for instance, can ever repay our debt to our parents? We owe, in a sense, everything to them—life itself, the patient tenderness and love that shielded us through long years of helpless infancy, the discipline and education of our childhood, our start in life, and often the memory of a fine example and of a steadfast faith. This we owe to our parents; and, however dutiful and loving we have been, have the best of us discharged that debt? Or, again, many of us owe an undying debt of gratitude to some teacher, minister, friend, now long since dead, who gave us the first impulse to a new and higher life. Could we ever repay that priceless boon? And, to come closer still, who of us ever feels that we can repay each other the benefits of a trusted friendship? It is one of the strange but rewarding aspects of such a relationship that each feels he owes the other more than he can ever repay, which is what St Paul means, no doubt, when he says, 'Owe no man anything, save to love one another.'

How, then, are we to pay these spiritual debts? We can never discharge our obligations to those who have enriched our lives with the highest benefits, but *we can pass them on.* Our debt to the past, let us pay it to the future; what the ages of long ago have deposited as a treasure in our lives, let us transmit, enriched by our own contribution, to the ages to come; our debt to our parents, let us pay it to our children; our debt to friends, let us pay it by giving our friendship to those who need us most, here and now.

> Our fathers in a wondrous age,
> Ere yet the earth was small,
> Insured to us an heritage,
> And doubted not at all
> That we, the children of their heart,
> Which then did beat so high,
> In later time should play like part
> For our posterity. . . .
> Dear-bought and clear, a thousand year
> Our fathers' title runs.
> Make we likewise their sacrifice,
> Defrauding not our sons!

3. We see now the deep and moving significance of these words of St Paul: 'I am debtor to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, to the wise and the unwise.' He knew that the gift of the gospel was a free gift of God to his soul, but not that he might keep it for himself. It was a trust; something to be enjoyed, but also to be shared, and to be shared most with those who needed it most.

¶ 'The Christian gospel,' as has been finely said, 'is not a jewel to be hidden in a casket and locked in a safe, but wealth to be dispensed in blessing; not bread to be wrapped up in a cloth and stored away, but bread of life to be broken and distributed to others; not water to be kept in tanks and reservoirs, but living water for quenching the spiritual thirst of men.'

Here, then, is our adequate and sufficient missionary motive—our dynamic for missionary service in non-Christian lands—our love and debt to Christ, our love and debt to the Christless. Pity may move, a sense of duty may sustain, but love will be our supreme motive and our enduring power. Love and debtorship unite in their challenge and claim, sending us forth into the highways and byways of our own land, and overseas to other lands, that we may bring men into living and vital relations with Jesus Christ.

¶ Under the constraint and demand of love a vast multitude of Christian men and women have been guided into varied and fruitful fields of helpful service. A hundred names leap to the lips. Motivated by these ideals Wilberforce devoted himself to the abolition of slavery; Shaftesbury to the ragged poor boys of London; Florence Nightingale to nursing wounded soldiers; Elizabeth Fry to prison reform; William Booth to the submerged tenth in our big cities; Xavier, Carey, Brainerd, Chalmers, Livingstone, Richards, Grenfell, Schweitzer, and a host of others, to Christian missions; Toyohiko Kagawa spends himself in the slums of Tokio, and by life, speech, and pen is in Japan a pioneer in Christlike activities and Christlike benedictions.

4. But even this does not exhaust the significance of this great text.

Paul clearly realized that the very nature of living religion is such that we possess it only as we share it. If we are dealing with material things, the more we give them away the less we have them. If we are dealing with ideas, the more we pass them on the more we own them. Our clarity and sureness of grasp are increased by the process of exposition. And if we are dealing with great ideals, the more we give them to others the more we possess them ourselves. But these parallel activities scarcely go to the root of the matter. For in a very real sense religion springs into new life in our own personality every time we share it with another. It becomes more our own every time it is given to some one else. There is something creative about the very act of giving. Count Zinzendorf, when a small boy, organized a society of similar small boys pledged to love the whole human race. His very discovery of religion was one with his discovery of the principle of sharing. The sense of singing vitality which characterized the Franciscan revival in the thirteenth century and the Wesleyan revival in the eighteenth century come naturally from the fact that in religion sharing is possessing. The coin which comes from this mint has no significance except as it is in circulation. From his first utterance in Damascus Paul found the vitality of his religion in the act of proclamation and propagation. In this deep personal sense he was debtor to the Greeks and the Barbarians. And in this deep personal sense we are all under the compulsion of the same sort of debt.

The Danger of Halfness

Rom. i. 15.—'As much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.'

Rom. xii. 18.—'If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.'

One hundred years ago an Englishman wrote a letter to a Scotsman with this sentence in it: 'If human beings would but do thoroughly all they do, I believe with you that good would be more forwarded than evil. Halfness is the great enemy of spiritual worth.' The writer of these words was John Stuart Mill, and he was addressing his friend Carlyle.

Now St Paul at the very dawn of Christianity was thoroughly alive to the risk of not being thorough in the spiritual service of the faith. In himself, as well as in other people, he felt the same danger of halfness.

1. 'As much as in me is,' he begins, 'I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.' He is facing a new mission in Rome, the capital of the Empire, a city which was even more pagan than most capitals are to-day in Christendom, and he engages to put all his heart into the business. Already he had won success in other spheres of the mission

field; behind him lay a good record of service in Asia, in Macedonia, and at Corinth. But he did not dream that he could carry out this fresh task simply in the flush of his reputation, as though a man of his wide experience could afford to take things easy now. The last thing that entered his mind was the idea that, after all he had done, it might not be quite so needful to exert himself at this time of life. When he contemplated the new mission he refused to think that he did not require to put forth all his powers.

In any vocation of life some are found who do not put themselves into the work, partly because they have the idea that it does not call for their full strength. Incredible as it may sound, they undervalue the task or opportunity, imagining that they can handle it without exerting themselves to the full, or supposing that for some reason it is not important enough to demand their whole time and strength. Such people are not necessarily indolent. They may be energetic in their own way; but the trouble is, they do not consider that their vocation furnishes a sphere sufficiently large for their abilities. It is one source of failure all over life that we yield to this undisciplined temper of halfness.

In prospect of the mission at Rome St Paul knew it would require all his resources and capacities. What he might have to do in commending the gospel to this new circle of people was as yet unrevealed to him, but he was perfectly conscious that the enterprise would demand all that was in him, all his attention and devotion and vigilance. He might fail or succeed, but he was determined to be thorough. And that is the right spirit in which to approach any bit of work or duty, whether it be private or public. It is not that we are to be concerned about our reputation, as though failure would lower our prestige; but for the sake of the cause which we have at heart, we should resolve and promise that we, at any rate, will not let the thing down by any slackness or half-hearted support. 'As much as in me is.' It may not be very much that some of us can do. Still, we engage to do all in our power.

¶ Joseph Conrad makes one of his sea-captains contrast the absorption of sailors in their duty with what he considered the easy-going habits of a landsman over his job. 'If we at sea,' he declares, 'went about our work as people ashore, high and low, about theirs, we should never make a living. No one would employ us. And, moreover, no ship navigated and sailed in the happy-go-lucky manner people conduct their business on shore would ever arrive into port.'

2. Then again, the Apostle reminds us, this quality of thoroughness is required also from the rank and file in their Christian relationships and responsibilities. 'As much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.' It is not merely a question of breaking fresh ground or of undertaking some new and conspicuous line of duty; the danger of halfness emerges in the task of managing our common life, which is so close to us and so unromantic and yet so exacting, much more exacting than we sometimes care to realize. For to live means to live with other people, in a series of concentric circles. The new spirit of fellowship and brotherhood calls us as Christians to live peaceably with our fellows. Now, whether it is international peace or social peace or the peace of Churches and families, it is not enough to utter pious platitudes or to cherish airy ideals of unity. To exalt brotherhood and co-operation in warm language is by no means the way to secure harmony on earth. Lovers of peace have to translate their hope into fact and act, beginning with the people next to them, and that kind of translation needs all that is within us, all our mind and will, if it is to be properly done. True peace has to be worked for—yes, we might even say, fought for—by resisting our pugnacious instincts, by overcoming selfishness and prejudice, by getting over the antipathies that set us against certain individuals in our circle.

It is far from easy to 'live peaceably with all men.' We may have the best will in the world to keep our temper and to avoid friction, but we know how some people are disagreeable and difficult to get on with, even good people. 'Offences would not fail,' says Carlyle, speaking of King George the Second and Frederick of Prussia in the eighteenth century: 'these two cousins went on offending one another by the mere act of living simultaneously.' Well, sometimes offences arise, in our families even, through no more serious occasion. People take dislikes to one another. They ruffle one an-

other easily. In our human relationships we are thrown against men and women who prove annoying in all sorts of ways; they irritate us by being unpunctual and wasting our time, or by being unreliable, narrow-minded, inconsiderate, incompetent, lazy, self-absorbed. It requires a real effort to preserve the peace in their company. But we have to do this 'as much as lieth in us.' St Paul recognizes the difficulty; he was well aware that if it takes two to make a quarrel, it also takes two to keep the peace.

Some of us forget that peace means hard thinking, a readiness to put ourselves into the position of others, a refusal to insist upon our own way, and a willingness to give and take. We expect peace to come through other people agreeing with us, and when they don't, and won't, we are inclined to abandon the effort. But surely more is demanded from us. Are we not responsible for trying to be friendly and patient as long as possible, and to keep the peace as far as in us lies? Each must judge for himself and herself when it is no longer possible to continue making the effort. But there is a temptation to halfness in this connection; we may relax our effort too soon, when nothing seems to be coming of the business. Genuine Christian love is long-suffering, slow to give up, and always ready to do its very best for others, even for people who are unpromising and thorny.

¶ Don't get weary of forbearing each other and *patiently* loving. I feel that Love wants patience more perhaps than anything—to keep it alive and flowering—to water its roots too. It won't grow without it. For even our dearest don't always fit into our notions of what we thought they would do, look, or speak.[1]

¶ St. Francis' counsel to his disciples as they went out to bring the touch of Christ's healing spirit into a divided world is worth thinking over. 'Our life in the midst of the world,' he said, 'ought to be such that on hearing and seeing us every one shall feel constrained to praise our Heavenly Father. You proclaim peace. Have it in your hearts. Be not an occasion of wrath or scandal to anyone, but by your gentleness may all be led to peace and concord.'

3. It is to the quality of thoroughness that the Bible is always calling us back; for 'half-ness is the great enemy of spiritual worth' in every summons with which we are being honoured in our Christian discipline, and on the lack of it most of us need to be addressed. Others soon detect it. We may be sure that those for whom or with whom we are working come to know, before very long, whether or not we are doing our best. But we may be unconscious that we are not exerting ourselves to the full, and that is almost as serious a fault as ceasing to put forth all our powers, upon any pretext. Often it is a failure in true humility, for the humble spirit means that we are ready to serve anybody within reach and need of us, and not to think that anything will do, as we handle them. We ought to be catching that spirit from the self-sacrifice of the Master who sets us to our tasks in His company. 'No man,' Jesus once said, 'having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.' Our Lord saw this peril of halfness in some who were not indisposed to join His cause and take part in His service of men. Such natures as He describes are not deserters; what is wrong with them is that their heart is not in the business, they look back over their shoulder, and take their attention off what ought to be absorbing every hour of their time and every faculty of their being. 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.' Or again, 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.' 'With thy might'! Most of us are such average people that we cannot hope to be mighty in any other way, but we may all reach this Divine level of thoroughness in doing or in bearing the will of God, as that will meets us in some high undertaking or in the prosaic duties of common life.

¶ During the War had a man strolled into a recruiting office and explained that owing to his business and its claims on him, he couldn't afford much time, but that he didn't want to be quite out of it, and would like to do something, and with that offered (what many think is quite enough for God) a quarter of an hour in the morning, and a like period in the evening, always provided, of course, he was not too rushed, the sergeant would have turned upon him with strange and blood-curdling oaths. 'We are at war,' he would have growled, 'and your wretched business is of no importance.

[1] G. Macdonald, *George Macdonald and His Wife*, 441.

The Army claims, not something you think you can spare, but you: all that you have, all that you are, all that you hope to be. If you are not willing to give us that, then out of this!' So Christ claims you, to work for Him, live for Him, die for Him, the whole of you.[1]

The Great Conviction

Rom. i. 16.—'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.'

The significance of this statement is underlined when we remember the contrast between the Christian gospel and Roman civilization. Rome was a city by itself; it was the capital, not of a nation, but of the world. It had mastered Italy and Greece and Northern Africa, and, spreading out its arms, it had gathered to itself the control of East and West and North, so that in all the world of culture now there was no government left on foot but this. We in Britain know how the pride of empire holds the mind; and though we ourselves may be no wiser or farther-seeing than other men, we never forget the greatness of our race, and we almost resent the suggestion that other nations can teach us more than they can learn. That high imperial disdain was perfected in Rome, and nowhere did it seem less likely that the gospel of humility and of sacrifice should find an entrance. And then, to make the matter worse, there had streamed into the city men of all the subject nations, bringing with them the superstitions and the vices of their homes, with the result that in Rome there was gathered a population heterogeneous and corrupt beyond all precedent. Work in Italy had passed largely into the hands of slaves; war was left more and more to troops recruited in the new provinces; and in the narrow lanes of the capital there was huddled a people proud, but with little reason, averse from labour and from thought, shameless in its vices, brutal and bloodthirsty in its pleasures. It was the Rome of Nero which Paul proposed to visit, and in view of which he said, 'I am not ashamed.'

And there were personal disabilities to be taken into account. Paul knew how men remarked on his shabby figure and his broken and entangled way of speaking. He had no grace of manner and no power of winning speech to commend him, and thus for him it might have seemed an altogether desperate adventure. He knew all that, and it only sent him back with more of admiration on Christ who could bear him through. If the treasure is in earthen vessels, at least it is a treasure; and with that as his only commendation and ally he was not afraid to face the task. It is a power, he says, a power unto salvation, and it is for every one who believes.

1. What first gave the Apostle courage in presence of odds so overwhelming was the knowledge which he had of the gospel as a power, a power of God. To Paul himself it had come like a strong man armed, and had broken his resistance down. There was a time when he not only dissented from this Christian preaching as error, he detested it with all the energy of his heart, for more even than heathenism it seemed to threaten those things which he had learned to revere. From the first he saw, what the disciples had not seen, that Church and Temple could not stand together, and that, if this Jesus were to be Lord, then sacrifice and priesthood were at an end. Now these things were very dear to him. In them he had found God, and the sincerity of his religion made him eager against the unlettered peasants who were threatening so much more than they knew. He spared no labour to stamp the mischief out. He could not rest at home whilst the fire was bursting forth in distant places, and in the midday heats, when other men were resting, he drove his party on to Damascus, as if the loss of half a day were unendurable. That was his mood when Christ laid hands upon him, not a vague dislike, but a serious conviction, which was strengthened by tradition and self-interest and a fanatical piety. Some men are fond of telling of their conversion, because they like, on any pretext, to talk about themselves; but Paul often came back on his own story because there, in an extreme case, he found the essential character of the gospel. It does not need to wait on favouring circumstances or moods; it does not require that minds should first be conciliated and prepared, though these may help. It is able to make its own way, to create its own conditions; 'the weapons of our warfare are mighty before God, casting down imaginations and every high thing that

[1] A. J. Gossip, *The Hero in Thy Soul*, 181.

is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.'

That record has found abundant confirmation in all the ages since. Men come to Christ by many roads, but in their various dialects a place is given to the constraint of Jesus Christ: 'We love because he loved first'; against that no strength avails. Inveterate habit of evil slackens its hold, and, even where the mind has been poisoned and possessed by unbelief, Christ makes His way. A man does not need to wait until he has prepared himself, and cleansed his heart for Christ to enter. When Christ comes, He does that for Himself. This made Paul bold in facing Rome. He knew that he was weak, but he kept company every day with things which were irresistible; and he travelled on from city to city, where hearts were inaccessible through pride, or defiled with lust, and he told his story, believing that God, who had mastered him, had a heart not less for these men.

2. And beyond the power Paul saw the urgency of this ministry. He had learned to use great words as touching human life, and here he singled out a word both great and plain, and says, this power is 'unto salvation.' As many of our noblest have done, Paul lived in sight of the Judgment-seat of God. With all his heart he believed that men were moving on towards that, and what stirred him in the spectacle of a city full of men was the appalling indifference. They knew the better way; even heathen men had a law written in their hearts; but day by day they fell below what that law required, and they took no heed. They lived as if mean thoughts, and greed, and rage, and envy leave no mark upon the soul. Their bodies bore old scars, marks of wounds, twistings and distortions from the custom of a trade, traces of hard weather; but they lived as if the soul were unassailed, as if at any moment they could throw the evil life aside and start afresh as strong and healthy men. And meanwhile, in following vanity they grew vain, and passion worked more deeply into the core and substance of their life, and the striving for mean prizes carried them away from the sphere of the great things. That met him in every street, lives going to waste, growing emptier, more hopeless, less elastic and pliable with every day. And they must all appear before the Judgment-seat of Christ!

¶ It was said of Dean Church by one who knew him well: 'He seemed to live in the constant recollection of something which is awful, even dreadful to remember—something which bears with searching force on all men's ways and hopes and plans—something before which he knew himself to be as it were continually arraigned—something which it was strange and pathetic to find so little recognized among other men.'

Paul, seeing with his heart the disaster of men, plunged into every crowd with the news of a Deliverer. He told of a power by which life can be re-made, and the bonds of habit broken—a power which can give even in old age a second spring-time of love and hope, which can so work on men that, without figure, it is true that 'if a man be in Christ he is a new creature, and the old things have passed away.' If the loss of a soul is not seen only at the end of life, but runs back and back throughout unfruitful years, so the salvation of a soul is not wholly of the end. It is health and life; it is hope where troubled expectation was, and strength and manhood where courage had given way. Salvation is nothing else than the life of God in the soul of man, and it is that we have in Jesus Christ.

'I felt,' says John Duncan, 'that if the evangelical system were true, it was worth believing.' In a world which is sentenced to decadence and decline, it is good enough to be true that God has verily sent into the world a power which is unto salvation.

¶ The Gnostics had a lovely legend in which they pictured the earth maiden (shall we paraphrase that as the human soul?) as Helen of Troy, beautiful, peerless Helen. But madness came upon her; she forgot her past, and who she was, and all that she had been, sank lower and yet lower, till she who had been Helen, who was Helen still, was a slave in Tyre, a thing of shame blowing about the streets of that vile seaport, wonderful Helen come to that! And there Simon found her, recognized her though so changed and shamed, dealt lovingly and tenderly with her. And slowly, slowly the poor darkened brain began to clear, and the cloud lifted from her memory, and into her wonderful eyes there stole back sanity, womanhood, remembrance, and she looked

round her at that scene of horror with a shudder of loathing, was redeemed, and saved, and made her own beautiful peerless self again. If only you will credit it, says Christ, whatever you have done, whatever you may be, I can do that for you.[1]

3. Paul's courage would not have been so great had this grace been hard to win. Good news for the few rather adds to the burden of the many; and if this salvation were for a nation or a class when the whole world groans under the common plague, there would be little comfort in it. The condition, if there be one, must be such as all can satisfy, lying well within the plain humanities. It is 'unto every one that believeth.' God says, I give thee, and the heart answers, I accept. God, in His pity, comes to the men whom He has made, and offers a life abundant and sufficing; and though the record of their ill-success abashes them, they take Him at His word. Paul went into dark places, and, in the name of Christ, he called men who had ceased to look for good; and they came, a slave or two, a widow, a social outcast, nearly all of them creatures of the shadow. They dared to trust His word, and they found themselves in a new society, where even the vocabulary had been changed, and all bright and happy visions had a place. 'Their faith had saved them.'

These promises of Scripture have never been proved except by men to whom at first they seemed incredible, but who flung themselves upon them to find if God were indeed as good as His word. And that, whatever our feelings and opinions may have been, is the answer which He desires. 'To every one that believeth,' it is said, which brings the question home to us, for salvation is in our offer.

Faith spans up blisse; what sin and death
Puts us quite from,
Lest we should run for't out of breath,
Faith brings us home;
So that I need no more, but say
I do believe,
And my most loving Lord straitway
Doth answer, *Live!* [2]

[1] A. J. Gossip, *The Galilean Accent*, 106.
[2] Henry Vaughan, *Faith.*

Power

Rom. i. 16.—'The power of God.'

Christianity is the religion of power. The gospel is not primarily a system for the intellect, though it certainly does present a reasoned system for the intellect; it is not primarily an appeal to the emotions, though it certainly does appeal very touchingly to the emotions; it is first and foremost, as the Apostle said, 'the power of God unto salvation.' The message it brings is a message of power, the gift it offers is a gift of power, the men it produces are men of power. And the gospel of Jesus is the gospel for this century just because to persons oppressed by the strain of rapidly-changing conditions, harassed by forces which they cannot escape, and by passions which they cannot subdue, and by mysteries which they cannot resolve, it opens out an inexhaustible supply of life, of strength, of energy, of confidence and of power.

1. Christianity, then, is power; and it has been so from the beginning. Go back to the very starting-point, where Jesus stands, uncrowned as yet, in the dawn of the Christian centuries. What is the first impression that His Personality creates? Is it not an impression of reserved yet sovereign power? That certainly was the quality that struck our Lord's contemporaries. 'God anointed him,' St Peter says, 'with power.' To a soldier He seemed a commander pre-eminently to be obeyed. To practical men engaged in their ordinary business He came as a master whom at all costs they must follow. To minds diseased or agonized one word of His brought calm. There hung about Him a strange force of majesty that smote to the ground the instruments of perverted justice, that filled even a cynical Roman with vague awe and alarm, that exacted the dying homage of a malefactor on the Cross—a force of such marvellous potency that its spell is felt even now.

¶ We recall how Napoleon expressed his astonishment at Christ's power. 'I,' he exclaimed, 'can gain but a wavering influence over the man whose ear and eye I can catch; this man, vanished for eighteen hundred years, still holds the characters of men as in a vice.'

And what is the story of the Christian society but the story of the manifestation of extra-

ordinary power? No sooner was Christ departed than there came upon His followers a remarkable visitation of victorious energy. A new, redeeming, character-making force took hold of them, lifting and delivering them from frailty and feebleness, and fitting them for tasks wherein success seemed scarcely credible. In Christians of every period we can recognize that force. We see it in St Paul and St John and St Augustine: in St Athanasius when he stood alone against the world; in Francis and Fénelon, Luther and Loyola, Bernard and Bunyan, Savonarola and John Wesley. We see it more rudely manifested in the valour of Crusaders, in the zeal of Cromwell's Ironsides, and of the Puritans of New England. Or we see it, in form less martial and more gracious, exhibited in simple and self-sacrificing lives, that have shown amid labours and sufferings how much 'the power of God,' possessing and possessed by man, can do.

2. Now, when we try to analyse this power, we come to the conclusion that it depends upon two things. It rests on a reality and on the experience of the reality. It rests on a fact and on the possession of the fact. It rests on a truth and on the response to the truth. Once give a man this truth and this reality, once let him feel it, realize it, utilize it, once set it home to him as a principle of his being, and there will spring in that man power that is certain of the victory.

(1) The first element of the Christian's power is a fact, or truth, or reality. And what is this reality? It is none other than *the Living God* Himself. And it is the Living God as Christianity represents Him. It is God the Father, who loves all of us as His children, God the eternal Son, who makes it possible for us to live as sons of God, and God the Holy Ghost, who, by dwelling in our hearts, enables us to actualize the possibility of sonship. God, the Living God, the Blessed Trinity—this is the mighty reality that is the ultimate basis of power. Whether we know it or not, and whether we interpret it aright or not, the fact stands thus, and nothing can alter it. The Living God is real. The Father's uncontrollable and illimitable love is real. The Son wills really to redeem us, and the Holy Spirit really does His work. This is the rock on which has been laid the foundation of spiritual power.

(2) If the first element be the Living God, the second and no less necessary element is a 'firm trust' in Him, *a living faith*. For, to produce in us actual force, the reality must be experienced, and the fact must be felt to be fact, and the truth by faith responded to. It is not enough that God be God. It is not enough even that God be confessed to be God—that He be believed in by the intellect, and accepted by the judgment. 'There is a faith,' says Neander, 'which saves; there is not a dogmatic which saves.' If the Living God is to be the power for us, He must verily live in us, and be God in us, our God. He must come home to us. He must be real not for the head alone, but for the heart and the feeling and the affections and the will—real in the life, real in the whole of experience, so real that we cannot but give ourselves to Him unreservedly.

¶ Charles Kingsley in one of his novels makes a character exclaim: 'I want a faith past arguments; one which, whether I can prove it or not to the satisfaction of the lawyers, I believe to my own satisfaction, and act on it as undoubtingly and unreasoningly as I do upon my own personal identity. I don't want to possess a faith. I want a faith to possess me.'

¶ 'The person,' writes Addison, 'who has a firm trust in the Supreme Being is powerful in His power, wise by His wisdom, happy in His happiness. He reaps the benefit of every Divine attribute, and loses his own insufficiency in the fullness of Infinite Perfection.'

3. When the Living God comes to His own in a man, what happens?

Well, first there is an inward effect, which may best be described, perhaps, as stability and security. It is Emerson who says about character that it is 'the impossibility of being displaced or overset.' And this unshakable strength in the face of adverse circumstances, this undisturbed tranquillity in the midst of fatigues and struggles, is the very mark of the Christian. Once let a man be possessed by the Living God, and he is carried away into a realm of restfulness. He is quite sure of God, quite sure of himself as God's. He can afford to be strong and quiet. Life now becomes for him 'a solemn scorn of ills.' He does not quail before the hostility of men—how should he when Infinitude Itself is on his side? He is not fluttered by the world's uncertainties; for

the best that the world can offer, the true blessedness on earth, unalterably is his. He discharges his daily duties without fretfulness or anxiety; for he knows that, as Ruskin has said, 'God always gives us strength and sense enough for what He wants us to do,' so that, 'if we either tire ourselves or puzzle ourselves it is our own fault.' The man lives with God, and in accordance with the eternal laws of God, and 'the power of God,' that brings security and rest, is in him.

¶ When we are 'saved,' says Bosanquet, the philosopher, 'we are at home in the universe, and in principle and in the main, feeble and timid creatures as we are, there is nothing anywhere within the world or without it that can make us afraid.'

When God comes to a man He not only works an inward effect of stability and security, He also fills him with outgoing energy. He inspires Him to act, to dare and to do, to become, in his measure, a force in the world's progress and in history.

Perhaps in times past this active and outward side of Christian power has not been fully appreciated. We have tended too much to think of God's grace as a sort of private luxury; as power of comfort rather than power of usefulness; as a thing to be enjoyed rather than a thing to be employed. Our religion has been too passive, too restricted in its scope, too selfish. How often, when men have looked to us for a display of saving energy, have we shown cowardice and indifference! How often, where protest was needed, have we allowed ourselves to be silent, and deliberately refrained from touching subjects that are dangerous! How often have we been overcome by fear of the unpopularity that is excited by interference with men's passions or their profits! Our own consciences condemn us. But we are beginning to see that religion is more than privilege. It is fruitfulness, and energy, and activity, and force. It is the might of the Almighty in the soul of man, put forth for suppressing abuses, put forth for relieving suffering, put forth for the betterment of social conditions, put forth for grappling with and mastering the complicated problems of a commercial and industrial age. Communion with God means power that can be applied; and we are traitors alike to the power and to its Giver, unless it be applied.

¶ A Hindu lady, gracious and winsome, ended her chairman's remarks in one of my meetings with words that are not only interesting, but expressive of many a tendency: 'After this address to-night I do not think we should have questions. We should go home and dream and dream.' Jesus knew how easy it would be after hearing His words to go away and 'dream and dream,' so His last words to us are that we should go down from the Mount and do and do.[1]

The Threefold Gospel

Rom. i. 16.—'For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.'

1 Thess. i. 5.—'For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.'

Rom. ii. 16.—'In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.'

We wish to deal here with the threefold gospel of Jesus Christ (or rather, with the threefold aspect of that one gospel) suggested in these passages. In the first phrase—'the gospel'—we have its objective aspect, what it is in itself, in virtue of its inner contents and self-evidencing truth and power. In the second phrase—'our gospel'—we have its social or communal aspect, as realized in the fellowship of believing souls. In the third phrase—'my gospel'—we have the personal, experimental aspect of it, as held in the faith of the individual Christian. As objective, it is fact, and truth, and power, ready to be assimilated, believed, and practised, but as yet unrealized and disembodied. As social, the fact is believed, the faith realized, the power exhibited in the common life of the Church. As personal, the objective fact and truth, held by the Church in trust, is experienced and manifested in the life of the individual.

1. *The Objective Gospel.*—What do we mean by this? We mean by it the 'gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God,' which implies that Christianity as a religion is founded on, or rather rooted in, certain facts and events in history. It is not an abstract philosophy, it is not an ethical code, it is not a vision of truth; it is a religion which, while fruitful of much philo-

[1] E. Stanley Jones, *The Christ of the Mount*, 257.

sophic speculation, and of very definite ethical results, and of rich doctrinal developments, consists in the last resort in an historical revelation centred in a definite personality of transcendent beauty and power, and consummated in and through certain events in His life, death, and resurrection.

We are familiar with the attempt that has been made to divorce Christianity from history, and to exhibit it as a theory of life or a programme of conduct which is in no way invalidated by the surrender of the supposed historical positions with which it has hitherto been associated. The religious environment when Christianity arose, they say, was charged with certain vital religious ideas and impulses. Men were universally filled with a passion for spiritual redemption; they dwelt longingly and lovingly on the old-world myths in which this longing had been successively enshrined; and round the figure of an obscure but attractive Jewish peasant, who had a certain vogue in His day as a teacher, these myths were deposited in a rich compost of ideas and doctrines, first formulated and disseminated by the Apostle Paul, who was the really creative source of historic Christianity as a creed and a power. In Germany, the land of its birth, this theory is already dead and almost forgotten.

It is the function of the study to deal with the question of evidence; here we shall only emphasize the undoubted fact that Christianity, as we know it, is the fruit of a deep and blessed faith in a revelation that was historic or nothing. It is significant that the earliest creeds contain no theory of life, no code of morals, but a brief, pregnant confession of belief in the facts through which the Christian gospel poured its healing stream into the world; and in thus emphasizing the historic element they show a sound instinct, for it is the facts of the gospel that are the fountainheads of the ethics of the gospel, the taproot of its doctrinal developments, and the centre of its practical power. The interpretation of these facts has differed in the successive ages and stages of faith, and they will continue to change as time goes on and men's thoughts widen with the process of the suns; but without the facts there can be no interpretation of them.

¶ The life of Jesus which constitutes the gospel is not only a life written; it is, first of all, a life lived. It is not the portrait of an ideal dreamed; it is the record of a career accomplished. Men may debate about what revelation has actually come to them from God, but the discussion can never avoid this particular Life which was lived in the actual world. They may not wholly agree as to what the Life means, but they cannot disagree as to its having been here. The gospel, as Canon Streeter has so greatly put it, 'is a poem—but a real person lived it. It is a drama—but it was acted out upon a real cross.'[1]

2. *The Social Gospel.*—The first original company which was the germ of the Church was composed, it is true, of individual believers, but from that day to this the converse has been true—the Church is the antecedent fact; the communal faith, that is, has been the matrix or medium in and by which all individual faith has been quickened and fed. So we pass on next to the Church rather than to the individual—the Church as the social embodiment of the gospel. The fact of Christ unquestionably created the faith in Christ. 'The' gospel thus becomes 'our' gospel. This implies two things: that the objective gospel has power to create a living faith in it, and that this faith has taken historic form in the Christian community or Church. And how potent and persistent has been this power! For two thousand years the story of Jesus has awakened, and sustained, and renewed a certain form of spiritual life among men. Wherever two or three of His people have been gathered together, there He has been, no longer as a splendid but isolated figure in history, but in their very midst as a living Presence and Power. Were it not for this extraordinary projection of Himself along the channel of history, the story of Jesus would long since have been forgotten; but while it continues men will turn back to the records of His earthly life and ministry, death, and resurrection, with a passionate interest and an unfading faith. What is it that always keeps men so busy with the origins of our faith? Is it not its historic fruits? Is it hard to believe the story of the Gospels in these days of a rigid critical temper and of pitiless historic methods? Then, we ask, why is it harder for some of us to disbelieve it? Because of the existence and vitality of the Church which continues that story—because of the regenerated lives of the men and women who through faith in Him have

[1] J. M. M. Gray, *Concerning the Faith*, 137.

become new creatures; nay, because His risen life has become our own life and our own joy.

This communal faith has been a mighty power over thought as well as faith. It has quickened theologically into the historic systems of thought; it has blossomed practically into various types of Christian character; it has germinated periodically into political and social reformations; it has awakened men into speculative activity in philosophy, into artistic fruitfulness in painting, music, and architecture, into literary creativeness in poetry and drama, into a fuller and fresher life in a thousand directions. Take away the stimulating influence of the communal faith of Christendom, and what would history have been? We do not know; but we do know that the ages of faith have been the ages of accelerated progress and most rapid advance in every fruitful direction; and that when the lights of faith in the Church have become dim, the higher life of men in the world has grown faint, and fallen stagnant. Every great revival in religion has issued in a renewal of all that makes men great and progressive in every social direction. The race has been at its best when faith in Christ has been at its brightest, when the Church has been at its purest. When 'the' faith becomes 'our' faith in the universal sense, then will the Kingdom of God come to birth, and earth be 'crammed with heaven.'

¶ You who are social workers, what are your special interests? Prison reform? John Howard and Elizabeth Fry, their consciences made sensitive by a high religion, started your movement. Settlement houses? Canon Barnett of Toynbee Hall pioneered your movement. Care for the insane? It was a Quaker named William Tuke who started the first hospital for the insane in human history. We cannot trace social care for under-privileged children without coming to a great soul like Lord Shaftesbury, or our conscience about slums without coming to General William Booth.[1]

3. *The Personal Gospel.*—But Paul speaks not only of 'the' gospel and of 'our' gospel, but of *my* gospel. The communal faith was significant to him because he possessed it as his very own.

Our faith, too, must be a personal faith, or it will not finally avail for us. Paul, writing to a Church which held the faith as a social fact, spoke of its members with solicitous and yearning desire: 'My little children, of whom I am in travail, till Christ be born in you.' The first and last word of the gospel is to the individual. A great writer speaks of Jesus as having first awakened that fine sentiment which he calls the enthusiasm of humanity. This, if we may say so, is a very partial and inadequate way of indicating a great fact. Jesus had no love, apparently, for man in the abstract or in his totality. He loved men in the concrete. The State is the political unit; the family is the social unit; but the religious unit is the soul. And it was to souls that He preached; it was to souls that He laid siege with His loving influence and appeal; it was souls He died to save. Therefore, the aim of all spiritual activity is the conversion of individual men and women to the faith of the gospel. The true Church is composed of believers, and all true believers are men who believe on their own account. Only as the Church grows by the addition to its numbers of such believers can it really and truly grow at all.

We cannot live on the faith of others. A life so lived is spiritually parasitic; it is a borrowed life, having no initiative and no propagative power of its own. Faith, indeed, is not faith at all till it becomes a personal faith. Alone we came into the world, alone in the deepest sense we pass through it, alone we must pass out of it. What, indeed, avails it for us that we live among people who are Christians, saints, if we do not ourselves believe? Their faith can bless us in a thousand ways, but it cannot save us; in the end it can but mock us with a sense of its own fullness and of our emptiness.

¶ Some things can be done once for all and we reap the benefit, no matter what we do. Columbus discovered America; it need not be done again. Edison discovered electric light; that is a gain for us all, willy-nilly. But soon one's thought passes over the boundaries of such public inheritance to those realms where, no matter what has been done in the past, it is of small account to me if I do not personally rediscover it, appropriate it, possess myself of it, and intimately live by it. All the courage of the past means nought to a man who cannot say, *My* courage. All the prayers of the past cannot nourish the spirit that never prays. There are no proxies for the soul.

[1] H. E. Fosdick, *The Hope of the World*, 45.

But when this personal faith awakes in men, what a moment that is in their life! Sometimes like the snapping of a chain, like the breaking open of a prison door, and all things are become new. Sometimes like the slow recovery from a fever, like the dawning of the morning after a night of fear and nightmare. But always it issues in a 'new creation,' turning chaos into order, and barrenness into beauty. It is nothing less than a passing from death into life.

The Severity of God

Rom. i. 18.—'For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold down the truth in unrighteousness' (R.V.).

1. THERE is a marked tendency to-day to neglect the severer side of Christ's teaching about God and judgment to come. A century ago the doctrine of eternal punishment, which was interpreted as everlasting punishment, was in the ascendant. Appeal was made for support of missions to the heathen, on the ground that the unconverted heathen went to hell. A change has come over our thought since then, which is certainly in part due to the following reasons. First, all theological dogmas are increasingly being brought to the bar of conscience. Dogma is being ethically criticized, and any dogma which is felt to contradict the verdict of the moral sense is rejected. It is obviously unfair, for instance, to condemn to everlasting punishment men who have never had a chance of knowing the truth as it is in Jesus.

Secondly, scholarship has done much to recover for us the background of Jewish thought about the future, against which Christ's utterances on judgment to come must be viewed. A large number of those utterances are quotations from Jewish apocalyptic books current at the time, and the language used is pictorial, and is not to be taken literally. Criticism has raised the question, which has seriously to be faced, whether the genuine teaching of Jesus about the future has not been coloured and heightened by those who committed the record of His life to writing.

Thirdly, the stress rightly laid upon the duty of the Christian to be up and doing in the service of humanity, the loud call, in an age which is interested in social and economic problems, to share the common burden and spend and be spent for others have tended to weaken the sense of sin, and to make men think that what they are doing for humanity is more important than what they are in themselves.

Lastly, one of the most notable features in the recent development of theology has been its emphasis on the Fatherhood of God. This is due to the recovery of the historical Jesus, as He lived and taught in Palestine. Jesus the pitiful, the humane, the sympathetic fills the canvas. We are bidden see Him trying to establish on earth the Kingdom of God, setting us an example of service and self-sacrifice, and using none of the traditional theological vocabulary about sin.

2. Now, in trying to appreciate any system of teaching, we must, if we are to be fair to it, take the whole of it into account. Can it be denied that in the teaching of Jesus there is a terribly severe side? Whatever allowance may have to be made for the possibility that some of His teaching about the future was coloured by those who wrote the Gospels, we cannot strike out all that He said about judgment to come. Nor do all His severer sayings occur in the apocalyptic sections of the narrative. It is only a subjective criticism which has run riot that will refuse to admit that He spoke in the gravest terms about the fate of the impenitent. Consider the tremendousness of such sayings as these: 'Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.' 'Fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.' And, though the language is pictorial and symbolical, consider the emphatic gravity of the terms used to describe the exclusion of the impenitent from the Kingdom —'the unquenchable fire'; 'where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched'; 'eternal punishment'; 'this place of torment.' Jesus plainly contemplated the shutting out of the wicked from the Kingdom of God. He spoke of the possibility of sinning 'an eternal sin,' and asked, 'what shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his life?'

It is certain that He spoke of judgment to come, and said that judgment would be according to character. By the use which men made

of their lives would they be judged, by what they said and did, or failed to do, by the nature of their response to Christ's own appeal to their consciences.

¶ We must simply accept the words of Jesus, and it is an unspeakable relief to find our Master crowning His teaching on character with the scene of the Last Judgment. The prophecy of conscience will not be put to shame, nor the continuity of this life be broken. When the parabolic form is reduced and the accidental details laid aside, it remains that the Book of Judgment is the Sermon on the Mount, and that each soul is tried by its likeness to the Judge Himself. Jesus has prepared the world for a startling surprise, but it will not be the contradiction of our present moral experience: it will be the revelation of our present hidden character.[1]

3. Do not our own spiritual intuitions confirm the verdict that a moral judgment awaits us? Here in this life we punish the criminal, and feel that wrongdoing deserves punishment. Is there to be no punishment in the next life? What meaning have our moral ideals and our struggles after goodness, if in the final issue ethical distinctions are to be obliterated? The ethical argument for immortality has always been a strong argument. We feel not only that the moral values of character have permanent worth, but also that justice requires that in the next life the good and the bad shall receive different treatment.

¶ Mr Yorke, the manufacturer in Charlotte Brontë's story,[2] 'believed fully that there was such a thing as judgment to come. If it were otherwise it would be difficult to imagine how all the scoundrels who seemed triumphant in this world, who broke innocent hearts with impunity, abused unmerited privileges, were a scandal to honourable callings, took the bread out of the mouths of the poor, browbeat the humble, and truckled meanly to the rich and proud—were to be properly paid off, in such coin as they had earned.'

What will be the nature of the judgment? We cannot take literally the pictorial language in which the judgment is described. No material flames will scorch the unrepentant sinner. It will be a spiritual judgment, spiritually administered. Here we may ask whether any punishment can be worse than that of remorse? To have brought home to one in a world where no blurring of moral issues is possible one's true spiritual condition, and then to be left alone with one's bare self, haunted by the visions of what might have been, is surely to be where 'their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.'

The point, however, to be emphasized is this, that our final state, whether of weal or woe, can be nothing but the necessary completion of our growth here. The finally completed character will be the exact expression of the sum total of all the choices by which the character was gradually shaped. Hence it is profoundly true to say that every day we are passing judgment on ourselves, and making our own heaven or hell. A man's daily choices make plain his character. The process is continuous. When the end comes the man will have made his own destiny. We have only to picture him brought into God's presence, brought, that is, into such a clear spiritual light that no excuses and no disguises are possible, to see that he inevitably becomes his own judge and condemns himself. He could not be happy in heaven, because his nature is not heavenly. This is his punishment, which he inflicts on himself.

¶ Is there but one day of judgment? Why, for us every day is a day of judgment—every day is a Dies Irae, and writes its irrevocable verdict in the flame of its West. Think you that judgment waits till the doors of the grave are opened? It waits at the doors of your houses—it waits at the corners of your streets.[1]

Yet it is true to speak of it as God's punishment of him, because the moral order under which we live is of Divine appointment, and it is God who has ordained the law that what a man sows that shall he reap. A human father may punish his child in one of two ways. He may either punish him by personal intervention, as the schoolmaster uses the rod on a pupil or sets him an imposition. Or he may leave the child to learn by bitter experience that his wrongdoing carries with it inevitable consequences, such as the grieving of the father's heart, the disturbing of the normal happy relationships of family life, and the like. God's method of punishment can hardly be thought of as belonging to the type of personal

[1] Ian Maclaren, *The Mind of the Master*. [2] *Shirley*.

[1] Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies*.

intervention. God is not a magnified man. He acts through the moral order and through the working of man's nature. But since sin is more than the violation of the moral order, since it is an offence against a Personal Spirit of Holy Love, the consequences which follow upon sin may rightly be regarded as bearing on them a personal imprint. They are God reacting as a Personal Being against human transgression.

4. It is because the nature of the Divine love is misunderstood that men tend to lose sight of its severer elements. Love as a sentiment lacks robustness; love as an emotion may be a weak and vapid thing, even though the passion in it be strong, if it is not tempered with respect for the personality of the one who is loved. It may overlook the wrong-doing, and forgive on easy terms, just because it does not consider the true welfare of the offender, who requires the discipline of punishment for the formation of stable character. God's love is a holy love, and His purpose for man is to form in man a character of the same kind as that which belongs to Himself. Such a love must be severe. God's purpose for man would be defeated if there were no principle of moral judgment in His governance of the world. But it is we who call out into operation the severity latent in God's love. At the heart of that love lies the readiness to forgive us, the desire to take us into fellowship with itself.

It is no part of our purpose to discuss the many problems connected with the future destiny of the wicked. We are faced with difficulties which we have no adequate means of solving. Some have held that at the long last all men will be saved; that the unrepentant here will hereafter, through much remorse and suffering and bitter spiritual discipline, climb gradually back to a state of reconciliation with God. Others hold a belief in Conditional Immortality. Only those survive who are qualified to survive, who have the necessary spiritual survival value. We may speculate without limit; we cannot know the certainty of these things. But if we take the teaching of Jesus as a whole, two principles stand out clearly. There is a continuance of personal life after death; and there is a judgment to come, a judgment by character. Jesus plainly taught that upon this world's choices depend issues which reach out far beyond this life; and that man is the maker of his destiny.

The love of God, how strong and tender it is! How patient God has been with us in our folly and sinning! Time and again have we thwarted that love, but it is still there, waiting for us to repent, ready to welcome us back again. Let us bring our lives out into the sunlight of that love, see ourselves as we are, and as we may by God's help become, and, if we have wandered from Him, go back to the Father as His children who want to do better, and come to Him because they know that He loves them.

A Mirror of God

Rom. i. 20.—'The invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity' (R.V.).

No believer in God can be indifferent to the revelation which He gives in Nature. No religion can separate itself from the facts of the visible world, or confine itself to the supernatural, and ignore the natural. The world of Nature must have much to teach about its Maker. We cannot as religious men be satisfied with regarding Nature simply in its practical usefulness. We must also, if we believe in God, ascertain its significance. 'The invisible things of God are perceived through the things that are made.' What, then, does Nature reveal concerning God?

1. *A Revelation of Power.*—What is the first impression which Nature makes on the human mind? Beyond all question it is a revelation of Power: power awakening admiration, wonder, fear; power impossible to measure or escape. Whether that power was manifested in the destructive force of some terrific storm, or simply in the inexhaustible vitality of Nature, or in the massive solidity and permanence of the earth, or in the immensity of the starry spheres upheld in space, Nature has always given to man an overwhelming impression of power. What makes this impression all the more overwhelming is the contrast between the power of Nature and the powerless insignificance of Man. It is the sense of his own frail tenure on life that has enhanced this mighty revelation of power.

Now, to the religious mind this power of Nature is a revelation of the power of God. It is a primitive reflection of religious faith that He who 'by his strength setteth fast the mountains' is 'girded about with power.' The Psalms are full of it. 'His strength is in the clouds.' 'He ruleth by his power for ever.' 'Praise him in the firmament of his power.' And it is worthy of remark that this characteristic of Deity is what Nature appears chiefly to have revealed to St Paul. For the invisible things of God which are perceived through the things which are made are, according to St Paul, 'his everlasting power and divinity.'

¶ 'I recall how, during a determined aeroplane raid on London, hostile bombs and defensive anti-aircraft guns were noisily disturbing the night—when suddenly the skies opened to the natural lightnings, and the thunders pealed out their tremendous notes of glory. How puny seemed man's fiercest efforts in presence of this artillery of heaven. Guns and bombs were silenced: a solemn hush ensued as the Lord waked up out of His holy habitation, coming with cloud and thunder to rebuke His quarrelsome children. I speak, saith the Lord; do ye hold your peace! And as we all stood at reverent attention, with a certain expectancy, before this revelation of majestic power, more than one of us must have laughed at the shallowness of Pope's facile *Essay on Man*, with its attribution of such emotions exclusively to savages:

'Lo, the poor Indian, whose untutored mind
Sees God in clouds, or hears Him in the wind.'[1]

2. *A Revelation of Beauty.*—The second thought which the contemplation of Nature produces is that Nature is a revelation of Beauty. God is the Divine Artist and His creation is full of surpassing beauty. It is true that familiarity often dulls our appreciation of its loveliness or leads us to take it for granted; but moments of vision come when the realization of the beauty by which we are surrounded suddenly flashes into the mind. It may affect us on the grander scale when we look up at the white magnificence of the stars, or on the smaller scale when we are touched by the beauty of a common wayside flower. Without money and without price this panorama of beauty is spread before the man who has eyes to behold it, until, as his mind ascends to the thought of the One who creates and sustains it all, he is ready to exclaim with Kingsley, 'Oh, how beautiful is God!'

¶ 'Inquire,' exclaimed St Augustine, 'of the beauty of the earth, inquire of the beauty of the sea, of the beauty of the wide-extending air, of the beauty of the sky. They will all reply: behold and see, for we are beautiful. Their beauty is their confession of their Maker. Who made these everchanging beauties, unless He, the unalterably Beautiful?'

¶ Natural beauty stirred him greatly. In later life he was wont to hold that in itself it was proof enough of the presence and loving-kindness of God. It seemed to him so much a gift of grace—so unnecessary in a merely mechanical world—that its abundant ministry showed that our world is not mechanical, but the work 'of the limitless benevolence of a munificent will.'[1]

3. *A Revelation of Creative Mind.*—Law and order are stamped upon every part of the universe which man has explored, and the conviction reigns that, as new fields of discovery are opened up, the 'sentinels of order' will be found in their places. Without such a conviction—if, for instance, we feared that the sunrise might fail us to-morrow—it would be impossible to conduct the ordinary affairs of life. Without such an assurance the task of science, in ascertaining the truth of things, would be rendered hopeless. There are realms of Nature whose laws are as yet imperfectly discerned, but no one doubts that one day they will be understood. And part of the fascination of the scientist's work is to bring every new phenomenon under its proper law, or, on the other hand, assuming the universal operation of known laws, to guess at the existence of phenomena which are as yet hidden from our eyes. The universe is not a chaos; and there is a return on the part of science to the idea of purpose. It is true that of this purpose only faint glimpses can be gained, but the idea that the universe is the product of chance recedes farther and farther from view. 'When faced with the two alternatives of chance or Divine guidance,' said the late Lord Balfour, 'we are

[1] I. Abrahams, *The Glory of God.*

[1] H. J. W. Hetherington, *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Jones*, 6.

compelled to accept the latter,' and such guidance implies the presence of creative Mind.

¶ 'I had rather,' wrote Francis Bacon, 'believe all the fables in the Legend, and the Talmud, and the Alcoran, than that this universal frame is without a mind. And therefore God never wrought miracles to convince atheism, because His ordinary works convince it.'

The stars proclaim the majesty of God,
Those matchless gems—Divine regalia,
Whose ordered courses through the heavens display
The Wisdom Infinite, o'erruling all.
And when around on this fair world we gaze,
In signs so unmistakable we trace
The self-same order—telling us of God.
The spring-time, with its fresh young life renewed,
The summer with that life more perfect grown,
The autumn with its glorious tints which tell
Of full maturity. Then winter's robe
Of spotless fairness. All in order move
'Neath the wise rule of God.[1]

4. *A Revelation of Goodness.*—Is Nature also a revelation of Goodness? No candid observer of Nature can remain unaware of the element of struggle which pervades the entire realm, and everyone is haunted from time to time by the pain and suffering which abound. The marvellous beauty which meets the eye is produced at the cost of sacrifice, and the operation of the inexorable laws of Nature often results in undeserved suffering. It is true that such writers as John Stuart Mill in his well-known essay, and Tennyson in the familiar line, 'Nature red in tooth and claw with rapine,' erred by projecting our human feelings into the world of Nature, and exaggerated its pain and suffering. From this position there has been a reaction, until some authorities now deny that there is any pain and suffering in the world of Nature as we understand it. The reaction has probably gone too far, and it is better to recognize the existence, in measure, of suffering and pain in Nature. But the Christian who has learned to believe in a suffering God, and who has seen in Calvary the supreme evidence of that suffering; who accepts the belief that sacrifice is the way of life, and has found that the most beautiful flowers in the garland of our human worth are those which grow at the foot of a cross, sees in the suffering of Nature an evidence of the fact that woven into the very woof and warp of the universe is the pattern of the Cross, that Nature is baptized in the spirit of Jesus, that man's creation was accomplished by the same means as his redemption. The character of the God made known to him in the Christian revelation he sees mirrored in the world of Nature around him, a God of beauty, truth, and that goodness whose chief element is suffering love.

I see His blood upon the rose,
And, in the stars, the glory of His eyes;
His body gleams amid eternal snows,
His tears fall from the skies.

I see His face in every flower;
The thunder and the singing of the birds
Are but His voice; and carven by His power
Rocks are His written word.

All pathways by His feet are worn;
His strong heart stirs the ever-beating sea;
His crown of thorns is twined with every thorn,
His Cross is every tree.[1]

Penitence

Rom. ii. 4.—'Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?'

In this passage St Paul is addressing a typical Jewish sinner. 'Do you suppose,' he says, 'that a special exemption will be made in your favour, and that you will personally escape punishment for your sins? Or are you presuming on God's abundant goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, which have hitherto delayed the punishment? If so, you make a great mistake. The object of that goodness is not that you may be exempted from punishment, but to induce you to repent, while in your hardened, impenitent heart you are laying up for yourself wrath against the Day of Wrath, when the righteous judgment of God will be revealed.'

Such an expostulation, in substance, if not in actual words, might be addressed to any who, year after year, have put off turning to God with

[1] P. D. van der Swan.

[1] Joseph Plunkett.

all their heart. They may not perhaps consciously argue that the goodness of God will exempt them from punishment, but that is the feeling at the back of their minds. They do not see that the real object of the Divine goodness is to induce them to repent.

1. Penitence does not mean exactly the same thing to different people and under different circumstances. In all penitence there must always indeed be conviction of sin, confession of sin, and contrition for sin; but the extent to which these are felt and their mode of expression often differ. There is the penitence of the sinner, for instance, and the penitence of the saint. Take two extreme cases. First, the penitence of conversion, when the soul, after many years, suddenly or gradually realizes its alienation from God. Those who have had experience know how tremendous is the revulsion of feeling which accompanies the first beginnings of a complete and fundamental change of character and life.

Then, secondly, take as an opposite extreme the penitence of saintliness—the daily penitence of the life-long servants of God, who still, while striving after holiness, find the continual need of sorrow for sin in their humble-minded and scrupulous consciences. That stands in sharp contrast to conversion and repentance. It deals with smaller sins; it is more delicate in its self-restraint, deeper in its self-knowledge, less violent in its expression; but the feeling of contrition below the surface is equally sincere and equally fervent.

Between these two extremes there are various types and degrees of the penitential feeling. To each of us, probably, penitence has a meaning of its own. Some of us perhaps are conscious of sins in the past, the influence of which still continues to affect our spiritual life. We may have repented of them, we may have given them up, but they have made our progress harder and more liable to relapse. Or there may be some sinful habit in our lives which we cannot overcome, lacking strength to resist the temptation when it presents itself, in spite of previous good resolves. In one way or another most of us, if we are honest with ourselves, have to confess that we are tied and bound by the chain of our sins, and need the pitifulness of God's great mercy to loose us.

2. 'The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.' God's goodness must always be a condition of man's repentance. Without it we could no more repent than we could do any other good thing. But it is not the only motive to repentance. The sense of God's goodness and long-suffering, the thought of Christ standing patiently at the door of the sinner's heart and knocking, stirs our highest emotions. But there is another motive which appeals to many minds—the thought of God's wrath. The penitent, in the early stages of his pilgrim's progress, has to try to balance and adjust his feelings of love and fear towards Almighty God. Is he to love God more than he fears Him, or to fear Him more than he loves Him? As we pass onward and upward, from penitence to amendment of life, from conviction of sin to sanctification of character, it is true, as a general rule, that our fear of God becomes more or less modified, while our love of Him becomes fuller and deeper. But both feelings are always an indispensable condition of the Christian life.

From the very first beginnings of the new life there *must* be love of God in the penitent heart. And, on the other hand, the Christian will never probably on earth attain to a state of perfectness in which his love of God will cast out all sense of fear. To the last his love will be tempered by awe. He will have lost, indeed, all blind superstitious dread of God's judgments; he will have substituted for the slave's grovelling terror of punishment the son's humble, reverent attitude towards a Father who is infinitely wiser and more perfect than himself; but that fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom will remain to the end of his life an element in his character which mingles with and modifies his growing and deepening feeling of love.

¶ The mediæval writer Tauler says: 'If a man serveth God with fear, it is good. If a man serveth Him with love, it is better. But he who in fear can love serveth Him best of all.'

¶ A correspondent, writing in *The Times* about a schoolmaster who had recently died, said: 'No preparatory schoolmaster was ever more loved by his pupils. With all their affection he yet inspired a deep respect, and it is no paradox to say that, while all the boys feared him, none was afraid of him.'

3. It is not, then, merely the love of God's goodness that leads men to repentance. Love and fear are strangely welded together in the making of the Christian character. We are sometimes, perhaps, too much inclined to minimize unduly the importance in religion of a due fear of God's wrath. Men say God is love; need we be afraid of His anger? Can we (they ask) attribute to a Perfect Being such a feeling as wrath? Is not the dread of Divine anger a survival of the teaching of the Old Testament, abrogated now by the new dispensation of love? Such ideas are more or less consciously present to many minds nowadays, and we may perhaps admit that anger and wrath have been somewhat unfortunate terms to use of a Being of infinite holiness. But substitute for wrath or anger righteous displeasure against sin, hatred of wickedness, inflexible determination to uphold goodness, and do we not feel that these things must form part of our conception of God's nature? Could we imagine a Being of infinite perfection to be careless or indifferent about the distinction between right and wrong? Must there not be in the Divine Personality an intense moral indignation against sin, a consuming and destroying energy which will not tolerate iniquity, so that nothing that is evil can be admitted into its infinitely pure presence? That is a Divine displeasure of which no human being can help standing in fear, and that displeasure is represented as a characteristic of God in the New Testament as well as in the Old.

¶ In *Green Pastures* God speaks in picturesque 'darkie' language about His feelings towards mankind. 'All I gotta say dis yere mankind I been peoplin' my earth wid sho' ain't much. I got good min' to wipe 'em all off an' people de earth wid angels. No. Angels is all right, singin' an' playin' an' flyin' around, but dey ain't much on workin' de crops an' buildin' de levees. No, sur, mankind's jest right for my earth, if he wasn't so doggone sinful. I'd rather have my earth peopled wid a bunch of channel catfish dan I would mankin' an' his sin. I jest cain't stan' sin.' [1]

Rightly viewed, the higher fear of God is almost the same thing as the sense of the hatefulness of sin in God's sight. If our penitence is to result in permanent restoration we must keep alive in our heart this conviction of God's hatred of sin. We know, perhaps, how difficult this sometimes is. When the fervour of our penitence abates we begin to make excuses to ourselves. We say that we are no worse than other people. We say that the sinfulness of sin is often exaggerated; we argue that our individual temperament makes temptation exceptionally strong to us. Once adopt this attitude towards sin and we are virtually on the path of the backslider. 'O ye that love the Lord,' says the Psalmist, 'see that ye hate the thing that is evil.'

If thou hadst not
Been stern to me,
But left me free,
I had forgot
Myself and thee.

For sin's so sweet
As minds ill bent
Rarely repent
Until they meet
Their punishment.[1]

[1] Marc Connelly, *Green Pastures*.

The Duties of Privilege

Rom. ii. 10.—'To the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.'

1. The frank recognition of their privileged condition was continually being forced upon the Jews. Never, for a moment, were they allowed to forget that they belonged to God in some peculiar way. No voice ever came out from the darkness in which God abode that did not tell them once again, before it spoke the special message, whether of commendation or rebuke, that they were His people, whom He had brought out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, and to whom He had given the land which He had promised to their fathers. Their history was always lighted up by the miracles which God had given to them alone. No forgetfulness, no cowardice, no mock humility was allowed to obliterate the difference that separated them from the Philistines and the Edomites.

Here, then, is the first truth, the first duty as concerns all privilege. God demands of all His chosen people—of every man—the frank recognition of the privilege that He has given

[1] Ben Jonson.

him. If God gives a man social position or education or religious influence, He does it for a purpose, and the cowardice or modesty with which a man sometimes ignores the fact defeats that purpose. We do not make a short and easy end of the temptation to pride which our privileges thrust upon us by just denying our privilege, whether to ourselves or to one another. The true problem is to acknowledge it, to keep it always in our sight, and yet be humble as the prophets of the Lord, who could say such sublime words as 'The word of the Lord came unto me,' and yet be so free from pride that they could serve the meanest of their people.

2. The next feature in God's treatment of His privileged people consisted in the way in which He was always forcing absolute standards upon them. The very fact of their privilege took them out of the range of mere comparison with their neighbours and compelled them to be judged directly by Himself. The Jews said, 'We are no worse than the Moabites.' 'No,' said God's answer, 'but the Moabites are not your standard. Let Midian and Moab test themselves by one another. You are my people, and I must be your Judge.' This runs through all their history. Their exaltation lifts them up to higher tests.

And this is true of all privilege. You have a chance of education—at once your standard of comparison is altered. It will not do for you, the educated man, to look around upon the mass of ignorance and say, 'I know as much as these men know.' You are separated from them by your privilege. You must match yourself against absolute standards. What fraction is that which you know of the entire truth? That is the scholar's test. The true scholar is known by the way in which he accepts that test and willingly applies it to himself. Or you have influence. Men look to you for guidance. It will not do for you to say, 'I do as much good in the community as other men.' You must be driven home into the absolute question, 'How does the good you do fall short of the best that a man can do for his fellow-men?' Or your education has made you know Christ from your childhood. Is it for you to say, 'I am as good as most men'? Must not your privilege lift you up above all low comparisons and partial estimates until you meet the word of Christ and hear Him say, 'Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father is perfect.'

¶ Haydon, the historical painter, tells us, in his autobiography, how he used to mix his colours in his rooms in London and 'carry them down on a bit of cardboard to the Titians in Lord Stafford's gallery, for comparison, every Wednesday.'

3. But the deepest truth about the purpose and use of privilege is that it is given to a man not for himself alone, but for the good of other people. We must go back to the Jews again. The struggle of God with that people was to make them fit for certain offices which they were to render to mankind. There can be nothing more unworthy than to think of God as choosing one nation out of all the world and making it His favourite, rewarding it when it was good, and petulantly punishing it when it was bad, as one might do with a favoured wilful child. But there can be nothing finer than the thought of God taking one of His nations and moulding it, training it, fusing its life into transparency, so that it might be capable of transmitting Him and His blessing to others. That was what their privilege was for. 'To the Jew first and also to the Gentile.' The Jew failed over and over again to know God's purpose. He took the privilege with which he was to help other people and treated it like a luxury of his own. There is something tragic about the misuse of privilege for selfish purposes as we see it everywhere in life. That man has lost the purpose of his privilege who takes for himself what God gave him to transmit to other men, to His great needy world.

¶ When Sir Philip Sidney was frittering away his powers in vain dreams and court life, his noble old friend, Languet, strove to recall him to the responsibilities of statesmanship for which he was so singularly fitted. 'Think not that God endowed you with parts so excellent to the end that you should let them rot in leisure. Rather hold firmly that He requires more from you than from those to whom He has been less liberal of talents. . . . Nature has adorned you with the richest gifts of mind and body; fortune with noble blood and wealth and splendid family connections; and you from your first boyhood have culti-

vated your intellect by those studies which are most helpful to men in their struggle after virtue. Will you then refuse your energies to your country, when it demands them?'[1]

This truth is shown in the tendency which every unused privilege manifests to disappear. Naturalists trace many of the varieties of physical structure to the way in which bodily organs, unused, dwindle and shrivel up. And so it is with privileges of whatever sort, when they are not used for the blessing of other men besides the possessor. This, certainly, was true in the case of the Jews. They were selfish about their privileges, wanted to keep them to themselves, and where are their privileges to-day? The world has taken the truth out of the hands of the faithless priest, and goes its way, using the truth, but leaving the priest helpless and neglected by the wayside. This is men's belief about the highest gifts always. This was Christ's story of the talents.

¶ There is a legend of the Irish saint, Columba, and a monk who had some precious religious books. Columba begged that he might see them, but the monk refused. Then Columba broke out indignantly, 'May thy books no longer do thee any good, thee, nor those that come after thee, since thou takest occasion by them to show thy inhospitality.' And the monk's books became unintelligible. 'They still exist,' says an author of three hundred years later, 'but no man can read them.'

In regard to certain kinds of privilege it may seem as if this were not true. 'Look,' men say, 'here is a selfish rich man who never uses his wealth for other people and yet his riches do not fly away. He is as rich as ever.' But it is like the unused limb. It does not disappear at once. It shrivels and dries up. The life goes out of it. And so social position or wealth shrivels if it is selfish. The respectability and pleasure which are their life pass out of them. They become mere shells which any wind of circumstance may blow away. So the best enthusiasm dies out of selfish learning and all real earnestness out of selfish religion.

Think of the life of Jesus. It was all full of privilege. A difference from other men which His oneness with other men only made more manifest. A superiority which was so absolute that the common types and symbols of superiority, money and rank, would have seemed impertinent. And see in Him how all these truths of privilege were evident. He frankly took His place. He did not make believe that He was not different from other men. He said, 'Come unto me' as if He were the centre of the world. And the more He stood above men, the nearer did He stand to His Father. He was always in God's sight, doing God's work. And yet all His separateness from men was for men's sake. He was the Divine Saviour for the souls of men. He lived and died only that all other men, if they would, might come to live and die like Him.

In their degree all the greatest souls of our race have illustrated these truths concerning privilege. They have frankly accepted their position of genius or of power. They have owned God's judgment. They have lived for their fellow-men.

Because I have been given much,
I, too, shall give;
Because of Thy great bounty, Lord,
Each day I live
I shall divide my gifts from Thee
With every brother that I see
Who has the need of help from me.[1]

[1] James Moffatt.

Talking with Ourselves

Rom. ii. 15.—'Their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.'

1. We are often doing that, talking with ourselves. The mind is like a room where thoughts or moral convictions meet to hold debate; the subject of discussion is something we may have done or left undone, some possibility of wrong judgment or action upon which we proceed to cross-examine ourselves. In the self-scrutiny we find our thoughts *accusing or else excusing us*, stating the case for us or against us. Any life which is not content to be self-complacent and superficial imposes upon itself, indeed, this exercise of serious self-judgment now and then. For even on the lowest of levels, while we all desire to enjoy the good opinion of other people, we also instinctively wish, not necessarily for mean reasons, to be on good terms with ourselves. We do want to think well of ourselves. So, when we are led to charge ourselves or to

[1] Grace Noll Crowell.

feel that we may be charged with some shortcoming or defect, our thoughts start an inward discussion for and against this self of ours, in order to arrive at some impartial verdict that will settle the matter.

Normally, our thoughts accuse us, the Apostle suggests; the exception is that they excuse us. For a healthy conscience does not seek to find out ingenious excuses or to discover all manner of mitigating pleas. And yet how often, when ordinary people come to think about a sin or fault, the thoughts tend to be thoughts of self-defence, thoughts of what can be said in our favour. Is it not the case that excuse after excuse occurs to the mind? It is seldom very difficult to make out a fairly good statement for ourselves if we give ourselves to the business. Most men and women are so kind and blind to their errors that they find it comparatively easy to soothe an uneasy conscience and to whittle down 'against.'

The very word 'excuse' suggests a sort of moral whitewash. Its associations are those of weakness and plausibility; we do not find this term prominent in the vocabulary of candour and courage. The only people in the Gospels who make excuses are trying to squirm out of a duty or to avoid fulfilling some promise or engagement which has suddenly become inconvenient for them. Jesus, for example, tells the story of guests who had been invited to a banquet. They agreed to come, but when the hour arrived 'they all with one consent began to make excuse!' The word 'excuse' has an evasive, equivocal ring about it. When you take it to pieces it often resolves itself into something trivial, with no backbone in it. Is it not more manly and noble to take the blame of a misdeed ourselves, for instance, than simply to shift the responsibility for it on to some morbid taint inherited from an ancestor, or to circumstances, or to the lax tone of our environment? Hard as it is to hear or to bear the truth about ourselves, so hard, indeed, that, when faced by a revelation of something mean, ugly, or weak in their nature, some instinctively manufacture excuses and even rush nowadays to the lower sort of psycho-analysis as a scientific refuge from moral responsibility—nevertheless the hard way is the way of health. There is some hope for anyone who lets his thoughts accuse him first of all, and in genuine penitence that always forms the first stage of treatment.

¶ This is the excellent foppery of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune—often the surfeit of our own behaviour—we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars; as if we were villains by necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion, knaves, thieves, and treachers by spherical predominance, drunkards, liars, and adulterers by an enforced obedience of planetary influence; and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on.[1]

¶ Jowett, in his introduction to the *Gorgias*, observes, 'Men are not in the habit of dwelling upon the dark side of their own lives; they do not easily see themselves as others see them. They are very kind and very blind to their own faults; the rhetoric of self-love is always pleading with them on their own behalf. Adopting a similar figure of speech, Socrates would have them use rhetoric, not in defence, but in accusation of themselves.

2. Self-accusation may go wrong in several ways, no doubt. Some do accuse themselves morbidly, as, for instance, when men and women will confess far more sins at a revival meeting or elsewhere than they have really been guilty of, because they allow imagination and emotion to carry them away. They may like to talk about themselves, even on the lower side. Self is the most interesting subject for some people. There seems to be an odd feeling in their minds that the more they accuse themselves the more pity from God and the more attention from men will fall to them. As though God did not mean us to be honest, even in self-reproach! There is no virtue in exaggerating our evil past. We are to be truthful, as we repent. It is well to remember that the Lord never gave us this direction, 'Let your sins shine before men.'

Again, it is a false form of confession for people to acknowledge eagerly their misdeeds, even to the extent of deploring them bitterly, if they have no intention of doing better. That's a habit of self-accusation little better than a hasty relief to conscience, for after all their upbraiding of themselves such persons remain pretty much as they were. A child treads on your feet as it rushes across the room; 'Sorry!' it shouts, and the next minute it does the same thing again. Some grown-up people are childish in this respect. Self-accusation with them is a facile emotion, which puts no discipline

[1] *King Lear.*

upon the darker and weaker places in character. Even in a finer fashion men and women will accuse themselves unjustly. There are cases in which far too much blame is taken to themselves by really good people, who think that the fault must be theirs if some one in their circle goes wrong; whereas they have done practically all that could have been done in the circumstances.

¶ 'Of all liars and false accusers,' Oliver Wendell Holmes protests in one of his stories, 'a sick conscience is the most inventive and indefatigable. The devoted daughter, wife, or mother, whose life has been given to unselfish labours, who has filled a place where it seems to others that only an angel would make good, reproaches herself with incompetence and neglect of duty. The humble Christian who has been a model to others calls himself a worm of the dust on one page of his diary, and arraigns himself on the next for coming short of the perfection of an archangel.'

3. When morbid thoughts impeach us we had better refuse to give them a hearing; they have no right to speak, and their 'against' is not the 'against' of God. But it is more likely that the majority of us go wrong in defending ourselves against the twinges of an awakened conscience, by pleading that we are not so much to blame after all for our misdeeds or defects. Perhaps we go the length even of resenting any reminder of them from the lips of our fellow-men, arguing stiffly that they have no right to sit in judgment upon us; they might have done no better had they been in our position, and so forth! So we gloss over our shortcomings. Possibly there may turn out to be extenuating circumstances which have to be taken into consideration. Yet, when our thoughts do take us to task for an imperfect obedience to the will of God, the first thing to be done is to own up frankly. Certainly there are degrees of guilt and responsibility, for some offences are worse in an adult than in a younger person; and even among people of the same age a fault may be morally darker in one life than in another. But we can surely trust God to take all this into account, whatever rough-and-ready judges upon earth may do. At any rate it is not for us to press these considerations hastily. Who would dare to urge, before God, that to know all would be to pardon all? Safety and wisdom lie in listening humbly to the thoughts that accuse us, in saying no more, to begin with, than 'I have sinned, the fault is mine.' When the penitent thief turned to Jesus on the Cross, he said, 'We receive the due reward of our deeds, my friend and I.' He offered no suggestions about the harsh penal code in Palestine; he brought no charge against the inequalities of the social order which had made him poor and others rich; he did not declare, by way of self-defence, that he was more sinned against than sinning. When people really face the Lord upon the inside of life, they drop any such pleas. It is God alone who can silence our accusing thoughts. But His word, that silences them and brings moral peace to the penitent conscience, cannot be uttered until we have bravely and candidly allowed the full personal blame to fall upon ourselves for anything that has happened.

4. Have we thoughts that reasonably excuse sin, as we take into consideration factors that serve to mitigate guilt and responsibility? Then let us apply these to others rather than to ourselves in the first instance. If we have to pronounce judgment upon our fellows we ought to make every possible allowance for such things as lack of training or handicaps of environment. It is, indeed, well for us in such cases to be very charitable as we deal with slips and lapses, and to be as generous in dealing with our fellow-beings as we can, without becoming lax or sentimental. When it is a question of our own faults it is another matter altogether. Then

> oftentimes excusing of a fault
> Doth make the fault the worse by the excuse.

¶ Turn thine eyes unto thyself, and beware thou judge not the deeds of other men. In judging of others a man laboureth in vain, often erreth, and easily sinneth; but in judging and examining himself, he always laboureth fruitfully.[1]

The method of moral health is to let accusing thoughts have precedence over any thoughts or considerations that may intervene to excuse us. Is it our misdeeds and demerits that occupy the court of conscience? Then we had better face the accusing thoughts, until we are

[1] Thomas à Kempis.

moved to approach the Lord humbly and sincerely without one plea. If we do that, then it will be as it has always been. 'When he came to himself, he said, I will arise and go to my father and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned. And he arose and came to his father. But when he was a great way off,' far off as yet, but on the way home, 'his father saw him, and had compassion.' Yes, so it is that God works with man oftentimes, oftentimes even in the same man's life.

Judgment to Come

Rom. ii. 16.—'The day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.'

1. *The Certainty of Judgment.*—There are many facts in the world, and also some powerful sentiments in the human mind, as we all feel, that render future judgment most probable. Thus, men have always been conscious that, unless its accounts were squared some day, this life of ours would be a moral chaos. Simply on the face of things, it is no uncommon incident for evil to triumph, for might to trample down right, for the defenceless to be undone, for cruelty and wickedness to crush innocent goodness. We are frequently told that persecution has invariably resulted in the increased life and power of the persecuted Church, but in the cold light of history that statement will hardly bear inspection. Let the persecution only be savage enough, and persistent enough, and clever enough, and too many facts are there to prove that it could do its work with terrible completeness and obliterate the hated Church for ever. Again, consider a man who has been foully slandered. The calumny works like a fever in his brain; he goes mad, and takes his own life. And as his friends turn away from his grave they say in their heart: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? These are but two instances among others which have convinced men that a day must come when the balance shall be redressed. The suspense in which we live here cannot last for ever; at all events it cannot if there is a God. Life is devoid of meaning, history is a mere blur, a mere huddle of confusion, unless some time or other evil men will be punished, and good men who have suffered wrongly come by their own.

¶ When David Livingstone was in the wilds of Africa, solitary and nearly broken-hearted, he wrote in his journal, 'I do not know *how* the great loving Father will bring out light at last! but *He* knows and will do it.'

All this, however, does no more than make judgment probable. It is the revelation of Christ that makes it certain. He spoke with entire clearness about coming judgment; He went further, and spoke of Himself as Judge. In one of His most striking parables He explained the principle upon which He will act in dividing good men from bad. Many people appear to imagine that on this subject Christians are guilty of misrepresenting Christianity. They speak as if the Church drew a dark shadow over what, as Jesus painted it, was a prospect all bright, genial, unclouded. But can any man read his New Testament and believe this? Can any man who looks into the Gospels conclude that Christ spoke solely in terms of sheerly unconditioned promise, whereas only in later times was there introduced the note of warning, of retribution? Why, as has been pointed out, 'the sternest and most inexorable language which the New Testament contains on this awful subject is to be found on our Lord's own lips.' 'You seem, sir,' said Mrs Adams to Dr Samuel Johnson in one of his dejected hours before death, 'you seem to forget the merits of our Redeemer.' 'Madam,' said the brave old man, 'I do not forget the merits of my Redeemer, but my Redeemer has said that He will set some on His right hand and some on His left.' If, then, any one of us has been inclined to entertain the opinion that the notion of future judgment emanates from Christians only, but has no connection with Jesus Christ, let him glance again at his Bible, and see the truth for himself. It was love, infinite love, which said of some men that such a doom awaited them it were better they had never been born.

One or two conclusions there are, very practical in character, to which assurance of all this ought to lead. First, let us prepare ourselves for judgment. We are going to stand before God, and we cannot hope to stand there as righteous on our own account or as self-sufficient; let us therefore make sure that we are personally united to Jesus

Christ, the righteous. Again, let us learn to regard the idea of judgment with a sense of gratitude. Think what life would be, or the wide world of mankind, if at its close there were no settling-day, no redress of wrongs, no clearance of character slandered and misunderstood; if God were not at the last to speak out His mind on all that has happened here. And once more, let us endeavour manfully to live as one awaiting this great experience. It is a thought to brace the will and fill the heart with sublime anticipations—the thought that we shall one day present ourselves to God and stand before the Son of Man. Shall we not seek to say, with the poet envisaging death and all the sequel:

I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.

2. *The Subject of Judgment.*—The subject-matter on which God's function will be exercised is 'the secrets of men.' In itself, of course, that phrase might cover praiseworthy secrets as well as those of a different kind. Nor ought we ever to forget the immense amount of concealed goodness diffused through the world. Many an anonymous gift has reached the destitute from undreamt-of friends. Well, some day these secrets will come out. We have Jesus' word for it. We shall know who were the stealthy benefactors of the needy. By their kindness they have laid up treasure in heaven, and God will call them out, before men and angels, and give the treasure back into their bosom. If any of us are disposed to these quiet, hidden charities, let us cultivate the habit. There is no better kind of secret to have with God.

But the Apostle is alluding to secrets of another sort. A glance over this chapter will show that he refers rather to the hidden things of darkness—secret sins that hate the light, like those insects that scuttle away into the grass when you lift a stone by the roadside. And so the lesson meets us here, that one subject of disclosure in that final scene will be the secret sins of every human life that has been lived.

Now under 'secret sins,' as a generalizing phrase, several types may come. For instance, it covers sins hidden from man, because they have been done quietly in a corner and remain undetected. Some of these are infractions of human law; others, though earthly justice must ignore them, may be as heinous as the rest; they are infractions of the law of God. Who among us has not somewhere a page in memory recording such things? They may be long past; the ink of recollection may now be faded, it is so long ago; have we dealt with their evil, have we dragged them forth into the light for God's scrutiny and God's pardon?

But more, some sins are secret because they have existed in thought merely, without passing over into action. There are thoughts of hate and greed and lust into which the souls of men have flung themselves with such unreserved passion that they rank before God as no less guilty than visible actions. What is it that makes us what we are? Our deeds, people say; but that is a shallow answer. We have to go deeper down. In reality it is our desires, our self-communings, our designs, the wishes, longings, hopes, into which we throw our very life. And so far as their guilt, or their influence upon us, is concerned, it may be comparatively unimportant that some external circumstance has interposed to hinder their execution. These hidden desires—soon forgotten by us, it may be, because they never came to anything—will be uncovered at the last. It will be shown how we became what we are. The roots of character, away down in the hidden regions of will and purpose, are to be laid bare.

But besides that there are secret sins in every life which never come to the knowledge of the man himself. Conscience often is so crusted over with ignorance, or with natural prejudice in our own favour, that we may remain unconscious of failings that to the bystander are self-evident. So it is, as some one has put it, that each of us carries about with him 'an underworld of darkness,' full, it may be, of sins that live and multiply away down, far from the light. These sins also will be made manifest.

¶ Be beforehand with the Day of Judgment. That which you confess now will be blotted out and forgiven in that day. That which you hide now will be in the book of God's remembrance, laid up for a record in the day of the great assize.[1]

[1] Cardinal Manning.

Ah me! the secret sin
That lurks and works within
The fair, false heart which gives it willing room!
How sure it bringeth blight,
Like nipping frost by night
That withers in the spring its early bloom!

Oh hidden, cherished lust,
Like a small speck of rust
On the sheathed sword—known but to God and me;
What if the weapon good
Unto the sheath be glued
On battle day, and I am shamed by thee?

Oh cleanse it from my heart,
And let me play my part
And put away what Thou would'st take away;
Leave not the sharp-toothed moth
That is devouring both
The garment and the soul it doth array.[1]

3. *The Person of the Judge.*—According to St Paul the Judge is Jesus Christ; and that, if only we could regain what Ruskin calls 'the innocence of the eye,' and read our Bibles as if for the first time, would be felt as an amazing fact. That One who has been here, who lived and died our life and death, should fix our destiny at the last—that might well be deemed incredible. But St Paul only repeats the unanimous conviction of all New Testament writers, and, indeed, if the conception be traced back and back, eventually it rests on Christ's personal authority. 'Many will say unto me in that day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And I will profess unto them, I never knew you.'

Now we may venture to affirm that, had we been given the choice of Him before whom we were to stand, we should have prayed earnestly that it might be Jesus Christ. The conception of judgment to come would be altogether intolerable did we not know that He who shall try us combines in Himself the attributes of perfect holiness and perfect love. We are forbidden to judge one another—why? Because in our case heart and mind are both such as to disqualify us for the office; we know so little, we love so little, that not even our best friend could be sure of justice at our hands. But Christ unites an absolute knowledge with boundless sympathy—a sympathy that owes its utter depth and tenderness of comprehension to His own earthly years of sorrow and temptation. It is His likeness to His brethren in all things that has rendered Him not only a faithful and merciful High Priest, but also the fit Judge of all mankind.

¶ It is said that in former days in France, before the dark flood of Atheism overspread it, that in every court of justice, in every place of assize, and in the tribunals of that country, there was suspended above the judgment seat a crucifix. That crucifix was to remind the prisoner at the bar, and to remind those who were present as witnesses, or otherwise, in court, that whatever the judgment, that whatever the verdict of the human judge might be, there was that other judgment still before them, the judgment of Christ.[1]

That is our first reflection; but the second is that it is, after all, no great matter for surprise that Jesus Christ should be our Judge. Nothing else is really possible. Is He not judging us every day by the attitude we take towards Him? The sunlight tries the ill-dyed cloth; yes, and the cloth tries and condemns itself by the rapid fading of its colours in the searching heat. So we fix our place in the spiritual realm by the persistent treatment we accord to Jesus. There is no condemnation for any but such as are self-condemned. Spectrum analysis declares that the metals far above us in sun or star—the iron, the sodium, and the rest—are precisely identical with those found down here on earth, with identical qualities; and similarly, whatever verdict may be spoken over us will first have been written out and countersigned by our own hand.

If this be true in its main outlines and implications, what do we mean to do about it? Are we going to drift on to the great ordeal, ignoring the issues; or are we going to take hold of our life, firmly and in God's name, and steer right forward in the hope of meeting Christ one day without shame?

[1] Walter C. Smith.

[1] J. M. Hewitt.

According to my Gospel

Rom. ii. 16.—'In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.'

The English word 'gospel' is the Anglo-Saxon translation of the Greek word *Evangel*, good tidings, the good news of the Kingdom to all people. As Christ was the first great Evangelist of the Evangel it came about quite naturally that the word was used to express the story of Christ. Thus the word gospel was applied to a book in which that story is related. It is used in this technical sense when we speak of the four Gospels of the New Testament.

But the word is used in the New Testament in a wider sense still for the whole Christian teaching generally, the essential message of which the books are the record, and all that the message implies. It includes, therefore, the Christian morality and the Christian beliefs, as well as the facts of Christ's life; as, for example, when St Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, speaks of those who 'obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.' It is in this comprehensive sense of the whole Christian teaching that the word is here used; for the statement which Paul says is part of his gospel is that God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ. It is not our intention to consider this particular item of Paul's creed, or to give a statement of Paul's gospel as a whole, but exclusively to consider the very striking phrase in which he calls it *my gospel*.

We might dispose of this unthinkingly by saying, what is on the surface and is, of course, true, that it is merely a question of the particular standpoint from which it is viewed at the time. From one point of view, the point of view of the Bestower, it is called, as St Paul puts it in this same letter, the gospel of God, and Christ's gospel. From the point of view of the contents of the message and its purpose, it is called the gospel of the grace of God, and the gospel of salvation. So from the point of view of participation it is Paul's gospel. This is, of course, evident and true. But if we left the matter there as a sufficient explanation, we would miss some lessons.

1. From this phrase we might well learn lessons of *charity and humility*. In the written records of the story of Jesus we have differences and discrepancies that are insurmountable difficulties on any theory which leaves out of account the personal equation of the writers. According to Paul's Gospel the truth took shape individual, not after the pattern of James. Each picture, because it was a true picture and not a copy, had its own perspective. We note at once the difference between St John's Gospel and that of any other. It is the same as St Mark's, and yet not the same. It is the same incomparable Master, the same adorable Saviour; but the one narrative is unmistakably different from the other. The same is true of the first three Gospels, the Synoptic Gospels. They worked over the same ground to a large extent, with much material in common; but each is individual, with special characteristics, according to the writer's bent of mind, and according to the special audience for which he designed it. We note, for example, the differences between the First Gospel and the Third: the one written for Jews, with special emphasis on the fulfilment of the Mosaic law by Christ as Messiah; the other written for Greeks, with special emphasis on Jesus as the Good Physician and the pitiful Saviour of sinners. Noting also how appropriate it is to speak of St Matthew's Gospel and St Luke's Gospel, we are helped to see in what sense St Paul could speak of 'my gospel.'

The great heresy of the Church in all ages, as it has been the great temptation of the Church, is literalism, the worship of the letter in some form or other. It is responsible for all kinds of formalism in the region of morals as well as of worship, the ethical formalism against which our Lord protested in the Sermon on the Mount, which interpreted the commandments by the keeping of the letter of the law. In interpretation of Scripture also it is difficult to purge our minds of verbalism, juggling with words and texts, and never taking count of the great spiritual realities, the thought of which the words are but the garment.

The same unthinking literalism dogs our footsteps even at the very heart of our faith, the revelation of God in Christ which is the gospel. Men speak with censorious judgment of some as not preaching the gospel, because their ears have not heard the particular phrases which they are accustomed to associate with the great message of the love of God. They

seem to think that the gospel means a set of formal propositions; whereas it is a question whether we can speak of the gospel at all apart from the gospeller.

Christian truth is eternal, unchangeable, but it is also relative and personal. It may, of course, be put down formally in a set of propositions; but here also the letter may kill, and only the spirit giveth life. The propositions may contain everything of importance, from the being of God to the scheme of redemption, all the things most surely believed, the things that cannot be shaken—and so these propositions may be fairly called the gospel; and yet it may be dead. Everything depends on the interpretation, the spiritual insight with which the heart of the mystery is seized and revealed. Christian truth is not formal, but vital; a spiritual thing, and therefore personal. So Paul was able to say 'my gospel,' a distinct thing, different from any other man's presentation of Christ, his own soul's apprehension of the Saviour.

¶ Music has certain basic and eternal factors in it which cause it always to be music and not something else, but it has also this constantly revivifying attribute, that each new musician who is possessed by it makes it a new thing. Palestrina could have said, My music. Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Mendelssohn, Wagner, César Franck—the merest amateur in appreciation knows the difference. Whenever music flows into the contours of a new artist, it becomes a fresh, original, individual thing.

Thus preaching is not simply the statement of truth, formal truth. If it were it would be an easier thing than it is, and could be without travail of soul and sweat of brain. Its function might then be served by repeating the necessary propositions. But preaching is truth *plus* personality. A man has to take the things of the Spirit, the things of Christ, and show them as he has learned them from his Master, no more and no less. Unless, therefore, we are so left to ourselves as to imagine that our knowledge and experience should be the standard and measure of all other religious experience, we will give up our attitude of censorious judgment. We will judge all things by Christ, by what is worthy of Him, as St Paul declared that according to his gospel God would judge even the secret thoughts of men by Christ. If men are brought out of the bondage of sin into the glorious liberty of sons of God; if the Kingdom be extended, the Kingdom of righteousness and peace and love and joy; if Christ be preached, therein we do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. Ought we not to be able to say this in the noble, great-souled charity of St Paul?

2. But the lesson of most moment to us is that *the gospel requires personal spiritual appropriation*. In the final issue religion is personal—how the deep of God's love calls to the deep of the human soul. The gospel may be put down, as we have seen, as doctrine in a system of theology to which may be given mental assent. Or it may be stated as a morality, a code of precepts, a teaching to be obeyed and carried into life. It may be expressed as literature, the story of Christ with the wondrous beauty of the ideal life, entrancing the heart and captivating the imagination. But essentially the gospel means the personal appropriation of the truth. It must be made our own. It must be a principle of life to us, the centre of our world, that by which we live. Paul's gospel will not save us, nor John's gospel, nor any man's.

¶ Intellectual interest in the countless questions that gather round religion is common enough. Men canvass one church or system against another, discuss theories and church movements, and argue in favour of one type of worship or belief that meets their taste, while only walking about Zion and telling the towers thereof without entering the holiest of all to 'learn Christ' by intimate personal experience. Christianity has a thousand aspects of interest; but, after all, it comes to a very personal point and makes an urgent individual call on our heart and will and life.[1]

When we speak of the gospel, the question is—What gospel? It is the one thing, the same thing, to whomever comes the vision of it, the revelation of the burning heart of God, the story of redemption, a message of love and reconciliation. But how do we accept it? In what sense is it our gospel? The life that we now live in the flesh, how do we live it? Is it an earthly superstructure on an earthly foundation that must crumble away at the touch of time? Have we simply left the higher life out of account, neglecting all spiritual interests,

[1] R. E. Welsh, *Man to Man*, 190.

cutting our life off from any future and even from any reasonable purpose? Our gospel is that by which we live; and if we have no other principle of vitality but animal existence, what a death in life it is!

But in Christ the whole horizon widens and life grows richer, and the world becomes an arena which claims and receives the interest of heaven. To be able to say, 'The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me,' is to be able also to say, 'My gospel'; for it is to be able to say, in spite of all weakness and sin, 'My Lord and my God.'

JUSTIFICATION

Rom. iii. 24.—'Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.'

The great Pauline doctrine of justification by faith, once set in the forefront of Reformation theology, has in these days fallen from its pride of place. To many the term is simply meaningless, to others it is repellent. It brings with it the aroma of the law courts. It is suggestive of legal proceedings in some criminal case, with a judge on the bench and a prisoner at the bar anxiously awaiting sentence. All which things are felt to be out of harmony with the Beatitudes and the gracious words spoken in Galilee and the whole spirit of the gospel.

The question may be asked, however, whether those who neglect the doctrine have really understood it, and whether they have ever faced the situation with which it deals. It should make us pause when we reflect how the experience of justification stirred to its depths the mighty soul of St Paul, how it made Luther's blood leap in his veins, how it gave to our fathers a source of peace and courage and assured hope such as we may well covet. There must be more in it than we think. After all, a law court is not a cloister where lawyers pore and mumble over dusty books. It is a place where vital interests are involved, where dramatic situations arise and hearts beat with painful intensity, where life itself may be at stake. If any man, anxiously awaiting judgment, has heard an unexpected sentence of acquittal, or when lying under sentence of death has received a free pardon, surely the experience would be incomparably thrilling and for ever memorable. If St Paul and Luther and Bunyan and many another feel that they have had such an experience, if by the infinite mercy of God they have escaped His righteous judgment on their sins, if they have received a free pardon and a new standing in the sight of God, and boldness to enter into His holy place, is it to be wondered at if they speak with full hearts of their justification and set it in the forefront of their thanksgivings? We shall do well to inquire earnestly what they mean when they speak of 'being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.' It will bring us face to face with the central problem of our moral life.

I

That problem is, how shall a man be right with God? As soon as man awoke to moral self-consciousness he realized by a Divinely implanted instinct that God is One 'with whom we have to do.' That is an inescapable conviction. So long as men believed in many gods it was not easy to tell how to be right with them. Men could only try by terrible and costly sacrifice to avert wrath and obtain favour. But when the knowledge of one living and true God, Maker and Ruler and Judge of all the world, dawned on man's mind, then there awoke the dread anticipation of a righteous judgment to be pronounced on every human life, and it became a living and momentous question with serious-minded men how they could possibly face that judgment. This is a problem which has exercised heart and conscience in every age from the most ancient times and far beyond the bounds of revealed religion. It is not a problem created by the Christian revelation; it is a problem which that revelation came to solve.

Upon St Paul, as a devout and thoughtful Jew, the problem pressed with special weight and insistence through the teaching of the

Mosaic law. God had made Himself known to Israel as a righteous and holy God, One who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and who will by no means clear the guilty. His law demanded nothing less than perfect righteousness. The law was an organic whole, so that he that offended in one point was guilty of all. It was an impossible demand, which reduced thoughtful and earnest men to despair. 'In thy sight,' so they confessed, 'shall no man living be justified.' 'If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, who should stand?' 'How can men be just with God? If he will contend with Him, he cannot answer Him one of a thousand.' St Paul has left a record of the agonizing struggle he made to achieve righteousness by the works of the law, and of how he found it impossible to attain to peace with God along a road swept with all the dread artillery of the Ten Commandments.

No doubt the mercy as well as the righteousness of God was made known to ancient Israel, and we cannot but suppose that devout souls found consolation there. St Paul himself, we may be sure, had blinks of sunshine even in his pre-Christian days. There must have been times when he hoped in God's mercy. But to a profound and deeply searching mind like his the question would ever recur, pressed upon him by an awakened and sensitive conscience: 'What ground have I for hoping in God's mercy? Do I not rather deserve condemnation under a righteous and holy law which I daily transgress?' It is evident from the verses which immediately follow our text that St Paul found it a real moral problem how to reconcile God's righteousness with His remission of past sins. As for himself, he says at a later point in this epistle, 'when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.' By this he means that his sense of God's righteousness, pressing upon his guilty conscience, made him feel morally helpless, and reduced him to a point where he despaired of salvation.

St Paul's problem is ours also. How shall we be right with God? The science of our time has produced in the modern mind a strong conviction that the whole world is a realm of unalterable law, and many who have no belief in God, speak of the importance and necessity of being 'in tune with the universe.' To the religious mind the laws of Nature are an expression of the righteousness and self-consistency of God who has given to the world its constitution, which He will unchangeably maintain. Both physical laws and moral laws are alike the manifestation of the constant will and purpose of a righteous and holy God. It is this which makes the fact of human sin so terrible a problem. Smuts, the great statesman and philosopher, referring to his religious experience, speaks of a crack running through the world, 'and that crack runs through me.' There is something fundamentally wrong, cracked, and broken, in the individual heart and in the social life of humanity. None can possibly deny it. And such a crack in the machinery of the universe must lead to ultimate disaster. The world goes on its unalterable way; consequences are inevitable. 'Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.'

Over against this concept of law there are, of course, voices which confidently affirm the love of God, and speak as if His mercy were to be expected as a matter of course. It is difficult to understand how intelligent people can view the situation so lightly and imagine it to be so easy of solution. How are you going to find room for the operation of mercy in a world constituted and governed as we know this world to be? The science of our time says quite frankly and decisively that there is no room for it. Forgiveness is impossible, evil must run its course, and the sinner must eat the fruit of his sin. What is even more serious, the awakened conscience supports this verdict. Its witness is that sin ought not to go unpunished. And so, however fondly the sinner may hope in the mercy of God, that hope is insecure. There will always be the haunting fear that mercy will not be able to prevail against judgment. 'God may be merciful, but do I deserve mercy? What is my plea? What is my ground of hope?' Thus feeling fluctuates, like shifting sand, and there can be no settled peace.

We are brought at last to this, as St Paul was, that if there be a remedy for sin it must be a remedy that goes sheer down to the root of the trouble. It must deal with the whole situation effectively. It must be no mere slurring over of moral distinctions. It must involve no obscuring of the righteousness of God, no hint of favouritism, no secret opening

of some back door of admission for the favoured few. We must boldly affirm that as there is a physical order by Divine appointment, so there is a moral order which must be maintained in its integrity throughout all God's dealings with men. Good and evil are essentially and eternally distinct, and it is unthinkable that anything should ever be done to obscure the difference. God will never deal in an arbitrary way with men, letting the law have its course with some, but removing others beyond its reach. Such inconstancy in God, if it were conceivable, would result in moral chaos, as surely as the suspension of physical law would lay the world in ruins. And thus we may take it as certain that if we cannot be saved in full harmony with the righteousness of God we cannot be saved at all. Few things are more necessary in our time than to make plain to all men that grace is no violation of law. It is this misconception which makes so many among us regard the Gospel as negligible and quite out of date in a scientific age. Miracles are rejected as impossible because they are misconceived as being violations of natural law, and the forgiveness of sins is dismissed as a fairy tale because the laws of the universe must take their unalterable course. We are as reverent of the Divine order as any. We are convinced, as St Paul was, that 'forgiveness, if forgiveness there is to be, must vindicate the moral law that sin has outraged. The very act that mediates pardon must also proclaim judgment. Mercy cannot replace justice; it must itself be justice.'

II

Is this possible? Can such a forgiveness be found? Can the problem of man's sin be solved in any such way. It was St Paul's conviction that the solution was found in Christ. In Him, by a crowning act of grace, God had reconciled the world unto Himself. In Him Paul found himself 'justified,' delivered from the guilt and condemnation of the law. What the law could not do God's grace had done, and in such a way that so far from 'making void the law' it had 'established the law.' This is a mystery before which all human words and thoughts fail, a mystery which grows ever deeper the more it is pondered. 'Justification,' says Brunner, 'is the most incomprehensible thing that exists. All other marvels are miracles on the circumference of being, but this is the miracle in the centre of being, in the personal centre.'

If the question be pressed, 'What did Christ do?' we can only make answer in words the full meaning of which we cannot fathom. He came into the world, as He said Himself, 'to give his life a ransom for many.' He made atonement for the sin of the world; He died for the ungodly; He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. And every Christian heart, making a personal application of all this, says, 'He loved me and gave himself for me.' We joyfully accept the fact, because it is a veritable experience, but we are not able to speak worthily about it, or to frame an adequate theory of it. What can we say but that 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.' We may think of Him in His Godhead taking upon Himself the burden which man could not bear. We may think of Him in His humanity identifying Himself wholly in love with our fallen race, and offering in our name the sacrifice of a perfect obedience in life and death. His was an atoning death, the supreme and unapproachable example of that self-sacrificing love which leads the innocent willingly to suffer for the guilty, a love which we reverence as the Divinest element in human nature.

In the sacrifice of Christ God's righteousness and mercy are revealed in wonderful unison. 'I will sing of mercy and judgment,' says the Psalmist. Nowhere can that song be sung more fitly than at the Cross. Here, indeed, we see that 'mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.' In the Cross there is a revelation of the righteousness of God. There, as nowhere else, sin stands condemned. It is indelibly branded as utterly hostile to God and hateful in His sight. No one who has found mercy at the Cross can be for a moment in doubt that sin is under the condemnation of a holy God, and is absolutely to be renounced and put away. At the same time in the Cross there is a revelation of the mercy and love of God. We there behold a Divine love which could not be overcome by any degree of provocation. The Saviour, having wholly identified Himself with sinful men, held on firmly to the end, even though it seemed in the last

dark hour to cut Him off from fellowship with God. It was as if in the infinite intensity of His immeasurable love He had vowed that if the world were to be condemned He would share and bear its condemnation. He was willing to be made a lost soul for the salvation of sinners. In His hour of agony He faced that dread prospect, and not even the oncoming of death could turn Him from His redeeming purpose. It is a mystery and a miracle of grace beyond our power to fathom. What can we say but just this, that He did all that needed to be done for man's salvation, He fulfilled all righteousness; in St Paul's phrase, He broke down the middle wall of partition and reconciled the world to God. He won the Kingdom of Heaven for Himself and for all His people; He entered in His own right into the holiest of all, and left the way open for all who would follow Him.

III

On the ground, therefore, of His finished work and perfect sacrifice sinners are justified in the sight of God through faith in Him. This is the good news, the very heart of the gospel, that salvation is a free gift of God in Christ. A gift, of course, needs to be accepted, and faith is simply our acceptance of God's free gift. There is no sinner in all the wide world who is not entitled to say with St Paul, 'He loved me and gave himself for me.' 'In my place condemned he stood, sealed my pardon with his blood.' When we accept this in faith, then are we united to Christ, one might even say, identified with Christ, so that in Him we have a new standing in the sight of God. It may seem a cold and external and artificial thing to say that our sins are laid on Him and we are clothed in the robe of His righteousness, but what is meant is that a bond is formed between the believer and Christ which, like a perfect marriage bond, issues in a union of love involving a complete identity of interests and gifts and privileges and fortune.

Once this is grasped we are in a position to understand and to feel the thrill which comes to the sinner who knows that he is justified. It is no mere legal transaction, but a complete Divine salvation. It gives a ground of hope such as can be found nowhere else. The believer says in effect, 'My righteousness is nothing, and I wholly abandon it, and base no claim upon it. Nothing in my hand I bring. But Christ's righteousness is perfect, and by the grace of God I am privileged to take my stand on that. And I do take my stand on it with all holy boldness and confidence. I dare to say with the Apostle, 'Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that shall condemn? Paul's Christ is my Christ too and, therefore, being justified by faith I have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

Such is the wonderful experience of justification by which Christ's people have access into the grace wherein they stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. It inspires the great evangelical hymns, such as Zinzendorf's hymn as translated by John Wesley,

> Jesus Thy blood and righteousness
> My beauty are, my glorious dress;
> 'Mid flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
> With joy shall I lift up my head.
>
> Bold shall I stand in Thy great day;
> For who aught to my charge shall lay?
> Fully, through these, absolved I am
> From sin and fear, from guilt and shame.

This may seem to many a heady and presumptuous doctrine, and so it would be if it were in any degree the voice of self-righteousness. But it is the song of those who have attained to hope through utter despair of self, and who now say, 'To God alone be the glory.'

This doctrine of justification, which has often been denounced as subversive of morality, on the contrary, becomes in the believer the greatest possible incentive to a good life. Being justified by grace we are brought into the favour and into the family of God. We are no longer servants but sons, and we are inspired to live and work as sons by the new spirit given to us. And so it may confidently be said that God's justification of sinners in Christ is justified by its fruits in life and service. But we must begin at the beginning. We must enter the Kingdom by the lowly door of faith. We can never be right till we are right with God, and the one foundation of all Christian living is to be 'justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.'

J. H. Morrison.

Christianity and Morality

Rom. iii. 31.—'Do we then make the law of none effect through faith? God forbid: nay, we establish the law' (R.V.).

1. By the 'law' here we may understand morality, the distinction between right and wrong, the rules of conduct which conscience lays upon us. And by 'faith' we should, of course, understand the exercise of Christian faith, the experience of believing in Jesus Christ, conscious dependence on Him for salvation, for forgiveness now and for acceptance with God hereafter.

The question, then, which the Apostle raises in the text refers directly to the relationship between the Christian religion and the obligations of morality. Does religion, while transcending morality, extinguish it? Or rather, does the Christian religion, while transcending morality, abolish its authority and abrogate its demands on the obedience of men?

Look at the matter from this angle first. When a preacher urges his hearers to believe in the gospel of the grace of God, is he justified in describing that condition, the condition of faith, as one of relief from the necessity of fulfilling the law of righteousness? Is the peace of conscience which he is bound to promise in Christ's name to those who put their trust in Him to be explained as a state of complacency towards the claims of duty? 'God forbid!'

Or look at the matter from this other angle. When a man feels moved to believe in Jesus Christ, and closes with the offer of Divine forgiveness which the Cross announces in appealing terms to whosoever will accept it, dare he anticipate for himself in the future a life out of which effort and striving shall have gone? Is he entitled to represent the remission of his sins, concerning which he has obtained assurance, as securing to him the privilege of doing what he likes without misgivings or fear of the consequences? Is he at liberty to think of himself as exempt henceforth from the necessity of struggling against temptation; as somehow superior to the common obligations under which mankind lies; as provided with a balm which allows him to trifle with evil and lapse into sin when he pleases, because it is guaranteed to be an infallible salve for a tender and wounded conscience? Is the law, in short, made of none effect through faith? 'God forbid: nay, it is established.'

¶ 'All our preaching was at first pointed at the heart and almost all our private conversation. "Do you feel the love of God in your heart? Does His Spirit reign there?" were frequent questions amongst us. But while these preachers to the heart were going on gloriously in the work of Christ, the false prophets stepped in, laughed at our heart work, and laughed many of us out of our spiritual senses. "The dear Lamb," they said, "has done all for us: we have nothing to do but believe." Here was a stroke at the whole work of God in the heart! And ever since this German spirit hath wrought among us, and caused many to rest in a barren notional faith, void of that inward power of God unto salvation.'[1]

2. 'The law is established, it is set on its feet,' declares St Paul, 'through faith.' The Christian religion, so far from annulling the claims of righteousness over man's conduct, confirms and, indeed, reinforces them. It does this in two ways.

(1) It sets before mankind *a larger and richer ideal than that of ordinary morality.* The man who believes in the Atonement wrought by Jesus Christ receives thereby no dispensation from the common obligations recognized by the general community. He is not absolved from the duty of conforming to them. He is deceiving himself, his ideas of what Christ has done for him are radically false, if he supposes that standards which apply to the behaviour of others do not apply in his case. He is obliged to be truthful, to be straightforward, to be just, to be honest. No degree of religious fervour, and no amount of courage in making profession of Christianity can compensate for the lack of these qualities. If he tells falsehoods his assurance of salvation is a bubble of delusion; if he pursues a crooked course he is anywhere but in the way of life; if he is unjust in his dealings he is no follower of the Just One.

¶ 'It was incumbent on the early Christians,' says Gibbon, 'by the strictest integrity and the fairest dealing, to remove the suspicions which the profane are too apt to conceive against the appearances of sanctity.'

Christianity presupposes fidelity to the common duties of life on the part of those who avow

[1] John Wesley, *Journal*.

themselves followers of Jesus Christ. But it is not satisfied with the standard of conduct which they prescribe. It unfurls the banner of a loftier ideal. As a member of society the Christian is obliged to be truthful and straightforward, just, and honest. But as a subject of the Kingdom of Christ higher obligations rest upon him. A purity in thought and imagination, a meekness under injury, a willingness to forgive beyond anything that is exacted by the ordinary precepts of morality are demanded of him. He is required, for Christ's sake, to exercise a moderation and charity in judgment, to display a patience in the midst of suffering and adversity, to spend himself in the service of others, not according to his convenience and a measured zeal, but with self-sacrificing devotion. There are two kinds of privilege. There is a privilege of exemption from particular duties—a release from the necessity of doing all that others do. And there is a privilege of engagement to undertake additional duties—a call to do more than others do. The Christian's privilege is of the latter kind.

¶ If Christ came merely to tell men to be good there was nothing new about His message. Men knew that long before. But He did come to bring men Godliness—that is, *goodness with a plus*. Christianity does not consist in abstaining from doing things that no gentleman would think of doing, but in doing things that are unlikely to occur to anyone who is not in touch with the spirit of Christ.[1]

(2) Christianity establishes and reinforces the claims of righteousness *by emphasizing their authoritativeness*. Every man, be he a Christian or not, is aware that there is a secret voice within him which speaks with the accents of command. Conscience issues its instructions to us, not in a faltering and perfunctory manner, but in a manner that requires obedience. It speaks imperatively, for it announces law. But in the case of Christians, the imperativeness which naturally attaches to the claims of righteousness is quickened and intensified. And what produces this result, what makes righteousness, in all its concrete forms and applications, more urgent for them, is the fact of their relationship by faith to Jesus Christ. He died for all. He resisted unto blood, striving against sin, and showed us in doing so that righteousness is as real as His Passion. He died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him who for their sakes died and rose again. Faith in Jesus Christ fixes us in a certain attitude to sin. The taking up of that attitude is synonymous with faith in Jesus Christ. We cannot truly believe in Him without adopting that attitude. It is the attitude of death—of insensitiveness to sin's appeals and promises.

And faith in Jesus Christ, who died for all, invests righteousness with a new significance for us. It retains all its old authority; but it claims our obedience and service with a new and conquering insistence. It enlists in its interest not only the natural impulses which conscience is capable of arousing, but motives of profound and amazed gratitude. We are subject as Christians to the obligations of devotion and loyalty to a person. The Love of Christ constraineth us to renunciations and relinquishments of gross and subtle indulgences, to a life of purity and integrity, patience, and self-sacrifice. 'Is the law made of none effect through faith? God forbid!'

[1] C. H. Ritchie, in *St Martin's Review*.

When God Speaks

Rom iv. 3.—'Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.'

The interest of Abraham's life in the Bible begins when God speaks to him, and when Abraham believes what God said. How God spoke to Abraham, or how He speaks to anyone, we may never be able fully to explain; but if there is a God at all, He is surely able to communicate with His creatures, to assure them of His presence, of His interest in them, of His will on their behalf. We know that in point of fact He can do this. He can impress us with such a sense of obligation as can be understood only as the will of God; He can inspire us with such sublime and solemn hopes as can be understood only as promises of God. Now what the text tells us is that when God has done this—when He has spoken and we have heard His word—there is only one right thing for us to do: to believe Him. It is not right to dispute God's command, or to criticize His promise, or to try to enter into any kind of negotiations with Him about either. His word is absolute and unconditional because it is Divine. It is not right to put anything else into the scale

against it, as if, perhaps, it might be outweighed. The only right thing to do, the only right attitude for the soul to take, is to recognize that in the word which God has spoken, whatever it may be, we are in contact with the final reality in the universe, and to invest our whole life and being in that. When we do so God counts it to us for righteousness, and it is righteousness.

1. The word that God spoke to Abraham was characteristically a word of promise. It is put in various forms at different periods of his life. 'I will make of thee a great nation.' 'Unto thy seed will I give this land.' If we put this in general terms we may say that Abraham had a Divine future held out to him in the word of God. When we are told that he believed God it means that that Divine future had a reality for him in comparison with which everything else lost both reality and value. He left his country and his kindred for it; he renounced for it the tempting openings which he saw around him, and every future which he might have carved out for himself. A home in Haran, or in Egypt, or in the plain of Jordan; a life like that of the Babylonians, or of the Canaanites and Perizzites whom he saw around him in Palestine; military ambitions like those of Chedorlaomer and the allied kings—all these probably meant as much to Abraham as to anyone. But he had had something revealed to him with which in reality and value none of them could compete—the future held out in the promise of God. To believe in this, though it meant to count unreal all that was most real to other men, was the only right thing to do; and as Abraham lived out his long life still believing, still counting God's promise the final reality, it made and kept him right with God. He stood before God justified by his faith, a man with whom God was well pleased, the friend of God.

¶ No man, since the apostles' time, has rightly understood the legend of Abraham. The apostles themselves did not sufficiently extol or explain Abraham's faith, according to its worth and greatness. I much marvel that Moses so slightly remembers him.[1]

2. We may not know how God spoke to Abraham, or how Abraham was so sure that it was God who spoke, but we know that Christ is God's word to us. What does it mean? What revelation of God comes in it, calling for our faith? It means that the last reality in the world, the final truth of God, is redeeming love, a love that bears sin in the agony and Passion of the Garden and the Cross, and holds fast to men through it all. What is the Divine future which is held out to us in it? It promises that we shall be sons of God, transfigured with the holiness and glory of the only-begotten from the Father. The Apostles were not afraid to believe this, or, if they were, the gracious revelation triumphed over their fears and enabled them not only to believe it for a moment, but to live by their faith. What stupendous things they say in faith, and with what simplicity! 'We shall be like him,' says St John. 'We shall wear the image of the heavenly,' says St Paul. This is the true confession of Christian faith, the height to which the heart can rise in men who have heard the voice of God in Jesus. And do we not know in our hearts that these are the men who are right with God? If we ask what His word requires must we not say that it requires to be believed? The one right thing to do in presence of the revelation and appeal of God in Christ is to stake our life upon it for good and all. This was what Abraham did when he believed God, and this is always what faith means in the Bible. Without it it is impossible to please God; but where He finds it He asks for nothing more. He counts his faith to the believer for righteousness; and in very truth the man who so believes is right with God. God and that man are pledged to each other without reserve.

¶ 'What is certain is,' says Unamuno, 'that for thinking believers to-day faith is, before all and above all, wishing that God may exist, and acting and feeling as if He did exist.'

3. But all men, as St Paul says in a solemn sentence elsewhere, have not faith. They have not all staked their life on the revelation of God in Christ. Redeeming love is not for all the last reality in the universe. Many live in worlds of their own which are by comparison unreal. Some are happy, others miserable; but none are right with God.

(1) There are those who live on the level of nature rather than of the Divine revelation, and who are tolerably content with it. God pro-

[1] Luther.

mised a Divine future to Abraham, and many a man in Abraham's place would never have given it a second thought. It was shadowy enough anyhow, and Abraham had already in his possession things which were comparatively valuable and real. He had a fair worldly position, and it was capable of improvement. He was rich in slaves and cattle, in silver and gold. He had the respect of the society amid which he moved, and no doubt knew its worth. Why should he give up all or any of this for the doubtful future offered to him by God? Something like this is in the minds of many people who do not take the gospel seriously. Their life as it is, without the word and promise of God in Christ, is real enough, and yields considerable satisfaction. Their business is real, and the interest they have in it engages their thoughts sufficiently. Their family life is real, and the affections are their own reward. Their intellectual interests are real; they find a true enlargement and refinement of their natures in literature, science, and art. Even their politics may be real, not to say absorbing. But if it be true that into this world of human life, with all its interests and rewards, God has come, revealing and promising something which transcends them all, does not that make a difference? If God has really spoken to us in Christ, if He has shown us in Christ what He not only wishes us to be, but what it is in His purpose and power to make us, is it possible for any man, however honourable and satisfying his life may be, to be right with God, and yet not to take His word to us in Christ seriously? It is impossible at the same time to be right with God and to ignore Him.

¶ Soon after the War I was chairman at a bazaar which was opened by a prominent Member of Parliament. When the opening ceremony was ended something, I cannot imagine what, moved him to expound, for my benefit, what he called his religion. He was not, he declared, a member of any denomination or sect, and he felt no call to attend public worship. Doctrines, creeds, and dogmas did not interest him. Religion for him had nothing to do with a far-off heaven, or with a mysterious Being beyond the skies. His religion was a 'Here-and-now' religion. To make every one happy all round him, and to leave the world better than he found it, was, he assured me, his religion. Man's highest good, that for which the saints and sages of all time have hungered and thirsted, that for which God-intoxicated men have given up all else and counted their loss gain, all this meant nothing to him. But this was the least part of his offence. He not only could see nothing in God to desire; he claimed my admiration and applause, because he was so blind, so spiritually stunted. It was as if he had turned from a Beethoven symphony to express his preference for the latest example of vulgar, ear-splitting jazz, and had invited me to praise his musical taste and discernment. If St Augustine's description of the human heart is correct, how dead, how far gone from its true purpose and end, must a heart be which can not only rest wholly content without God, but actually deems such a condition a happy one![1]

(2) Sometimes this life on the level of nature hardens through content into complacency and self-sufficiency, and the revelation of God in Christ is encountered by its worst enemy, the most absolute antagonist of faith, Pharisaism. What Pharisaism means at bottom is that man is independent of God, and can even make God his debtor. The Pharisee comes before God clothed in a righteousness of his own, a character and life for which he is prepared to take the responsibility himself, and virtually challenges God's approbation. But how can a man assume such an attitude to God? If the final revelation of God is made, as the New Testament shows, at the Cross of Jesus, is not such an attitude once for all impossible? Can a man stand in the presence of that Passion, can he realize what God's eternal love has done, and is doing, and will ever do, for the redemption of our fallen race, and think himself right with God though he ignores it all and takes the whole responsibility of his life alone?

There are many people, even in the Church, to whom the idea of becoming indebted to Christ is profoundly disagreeable; and because it is they evade the final revelation of God in His crucified and risen Son, and, without shaping their thoughts very definitely, hold by the Pharisaic conviction that somehow or other they will be able to answer for themselves. They do not take the word of God in Christ seriously. They do not believe it, as Abraham did when God spoke to him. But it was a Pharisee of the Pharisees who saw more clearly than any of the Apostles that in faith boasting

[1] Peter Green, *Our Heavenly Father*, 5

is excluded ; and even the Pharisee will become right with God if he stands by the Cross of Jesus till the power of that Divine Passion descends into his heart and reveals itself to him as the first and last reality in the world.

(3) But there is another world still in which we may live, not despising faith like the Pharisee, or ignoring it like the unreflecting man who takes life as he finds it, but dismayed by it as too hard, or incredulous of it as too good. When the meaning of the word of God in Christ begins to break upon our souls we may well be overwhelmed by its greatness ; it holds out a Divine future, no doubt, but who can believe it is a future meant for us ? Christ is in the world, the living word and promise of God ; and as we look at Him we hear God's voice assure us that we shall be like Him. This is the gospel. Only God could inspire a hope so wonderful ; but when we think of it is it not too wonderful ? is it not quite incredible ? *We* like *Him* ? We know in part what we are. We have fits of vicious or sullen temper when we stab with wicked words even those whom we love ; is it really meant that these shall cease, and that we shall be clothed in the meekness and gentleness of Jesus ? We are selfish, grasping, unwilling to part with money or to take trouble for others ; is it really meant that for us it will be more blessed to give than to receive ? We are inconstant and half-hearted in all our efforts to be good ; is it the very truth of God that this weakness will be overcome, and that we shall endure to the end, and by endurance win our souls ? Yes, that is the Divine truth ; that is the word and promise of God in Christ, in whom the eternal redeeming love of the Father has been revealed as the ultimate reality in the universe.

We do not believe in God at all unless we believe in One whose word can work this wonder ; and when we reflect that the redeeming love revealed in Christ has omnipotence at its command, dare we doubt what we are called to do ? What do we believe is the final reality ? What is going to survive and reign when everything else has passed away ? Is it the flesh, the bad conscience, the impotent will ? Are we to stake our life on these, or on the redeeming love of God which has come to us in His Son, and on the new creature to be created by it in God's likeness ? Do we believe in what we are as the ultimate reality, or is not the eternal love of God which appeals to us in Christ more real and able to change us into His image ? It is only this last belief that does justice to God and makes us right with Him.

¶ Père Gratry, in his tribute to Henri Perreyve, says : 'His whole life was but one noble, earnest effort to follow his Master's call ; that call which sets no lower ideal before the Christian than one of absolute, moral beauty, the very Beauty of God Himself. "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." There is but one way to attain this height, either practically or intellectually ; and that is, to aim ceaselessly at all that is highest, noblest, most beautiful ; and of all men I have ever known, this dear brother pursued such an aim most earnestly.'

4. The text is one of many which suggest to us two characteristics of the true religion much insisted on in Scripture—its simplicity, and the absoluteness of its requirement. When God speaks He demands to be taken at His word ; no more than this, but also no less. His word is not proposed as a basis of negotiation or discussion ; it can be neither abridged nor supplemented. To apply this to the Christian stage of revelation : redeeming love, displayed in the crucified Christ, is the sum of God's word to the world ; and all that that word demands from those who would be right with God is the final and unconditional abandonment of the soul to the redeeming love itself. God has not come into the world in Christ—Christ has not hung upon the Cross bearing the sin of the world—to be talked about, but to become the supreme reality in the life of men, or to be excluded from that place. To believe is to fall in unconditionally with the purpose of God. Faith is believing God, and when we so believe Him, He counts it to us for righteousness. He cannot ask from us anything more or less or other than faith. It is the one thing which does justice alike to Him and to us. It is not a part of Christianity, but the whole of it. It has the hope and power of all moral attainment in it, and it only needs to have its perfect work to make God's unspeakable promise good.

The Uses of Trouble

Rom. v. 3.—'We glory in tribulations also.'

Despite the accumulated experience of the ages and the insights of the seers, many think of an untroubled life as the ideal, and of trouble, therefore, as an intruder to be resented, to be removed if possible, and, if not, to be endured. We shall try to do justice to such truth as this natural, popular, and shallow idea contains, but surely it is shallow.

For one thing, each of us must know some person upon whom this kind of judgment could be passed: he never will get out of him all that is in him until he faces trouble; his life has been too safe and easy; he never has confronted calamity, and so been waked up and shaken up and had the deeper levels of his power released. Even in this sorely distracted world, where certainly there seems to be trouble enough, that is true of some people. No supreme artist ever reached the climax of his power until there was added the final touch of poignancy from the personal experience of grief. Tribulation, as the etymology of the word suggests, is threshing, and some fine grain of the spirit, in great music, great poetry, great art, as well as great character, would have been impossible without that painful experience.

¶ *King Skule:* Tell me, Iatgier, how came you to be a bard? Who taught you the art?

Iatgier: The art cannot be taught, Sire.

King Skule: It cannot be taught! Then how came it?

Iatgier: One gave me the gift of sorrow, and so I became a bard.[1]

On the wider stage of history the import of this truth at times is clear. Marie Antoinette added the final stroke of levity and folly which ruined the old régime and brought on the bloody terrors of the Revolution. A silly, frivolous girl, grace and charm personified, she flitted amid the pleasures of Versailles or fooled with her favourites at the Little Trianon. But when at last the Revolution broke and all her world of tinsel playthings came collapsing down and she faced calamity and death, she turned out to be a strong, courageous woman. Character had been underneath there all the time. 'Hitherto,' says her biographer, 'she had played with life and had never wrestled with it; but now, in face of so formidable a challenge, her energies answered the call to arms.'

Adversity is a constant and constituent element of human life upon this planet. What, then, if trouble is one of the most shining instruments which existence puts into our hands, without the fine use of which nothing beautiful ever has been done in human character, not merely an accident, but an opportunity, not simply a misfortune to be endured, but a new dimension in human experience, fit for splendid uses? Paul, who knew trouble if ever a man did, writes to his Roman friends, 'We glory in tribulations also,' or, as Dr Moffatt translates it, 'We triumph even in our troubles.'

¶ Fra Angelico made all his angels to have radiant youth, and robes of light and beauty, but G. F. Watts understood human life as God made it, and, therefore, he portrays two angels as standing in the room of life; one angel is the angel of joy, and the other angel is dark-robed, with hood of black, but with a face of unrivalled beauty.

1. Trouble can be finely used to call out our powers. Generally we succeed in getting out of ourselves no more than life demands. Many of us would say that whatever growth we have achieved, in available resources of character or abilities of mind, has come primarily from undertaking tasks and assuming responsibilities which seemed at first too much for us, but which we diligently tried to live up to. We placed ourselves, that is, in situations which demanded of us more than ever had been called out before and, so doing, we sometimes have looked at ourselves in surprise as though to say, I never dreamed that you had *that* in you until life called for it.

Now, of all experiences which thus elicit in us unexpected attributes and powers, nothing is more astounding in its consequence than trouble when it is well handled. Hardship does demand of us dimensions and depths which fair weather never asks for, and when it is well used its fruit is the most exquisite that human history records.

¶ There are few things more moving than the letter written by Captain Scott, freezing and starving to death in the Antarctic blizzards, to his friend Sir James Barrie. You will re-

[1] Ibsen.

member some of the sentences from the message of the dying man. 'Good-bye,' he wrote, 'I am not at all afraid of the end, but sad to miss many a simple pleasure which I had planned for the future. . . . We are in a desperate state—feet frozen, etc., no fuel, and a long way from food, but it would do your heart good to be in our tent, to hear our songs and our cheery conversation. . . . *Later.*—We are very near the end, but have not and will not lose our good cheer. . . . We did intend to finish ourselves when things proved like this, but we have decided to die naturally in the track. . . . I never met a man in my life whom I admired and loved more than you, but I never could show you how much your friendship meant to me, for you had much to give and I nothing.'

The real tragedy is not that we suffer, but that in a world where suffering is the common human lot, sure to come in one form or another to every son and daughter of man, we take toward it merely a negative and defensive attitude, get out of it such habits as resentfulness and self-pity, do not hear it calling with creative voice for those faculties and attributes which ease never asks for and no comfortable happiness ever can produce.

2. Trouble can be used to deepen our sympathy and intensify our usefulness. After all, it takes adversity to understand adversity, and history has some fine samples of hardship so highly used. One of the most considerable influences in the humanitarian movement of the nineteenth century, which abolished debtors' prisons, improved conditions of labour, and cleansed the English schools of their worst barbarities, was Charles Dickens. He was not simply a marvellous story-teller; he was an effective reformer. How vividly he described the abominations of his time, and with what indignation he assailed them! To be sure, he had suffered from them himself. Micawber was his father. His father had been in a debtors' prison. As a young boy, crushed with shame and crippled with poverty, Dickens had crept up to the barbarous place day after day, to visit his sire. When ten years old he worked long hours for a pittance, pasting labels on bottles in a blacking factory, and in his own person he endured the stupid cruelties of the old pedagogy. Then he rose above his adversity, transmuted by magic its lead into gold, made of it deep insight, profound understanding, keen sympathy, widespread public service.

Let every man say to his own soul: If you have had any experience with trouble, use it now. Let it carry you out beyond the barricades which too commonly shut our understanding in, and make for you roads of insight into the life of the people. Translate anything you know about trouble into such constructive care for individuals and for the social welfare, that somebody will have cause to thank God that once you yourself faced adversity, so that you can understand.

3. Trouble can serve our intellects as well as our characters and can cleanse us of some dangerous illusions. In particular, it ought to cleanse us of the vain illusion that life is always just, or that we ought to expect it to be just to the individual. Despite the accumulated experience of ages one continually meets people complaining because life is not just to them, and one sees that they actually have expected that it would be just to them, that they would be paid a reward for their goodness on Saturday night, and now they are resentful because, instead, life has turned out to be terribly unjust.

Where can people so bewitched have been living, or what books can they have read? Not the Bible. Was life just to Jesus? Was the Cross just? When He set His face steadfastly to go up to Jerusalem to be crucified, was He expecting justice? Or those predecessors of His in handling calamity, concerning whom the New Testament says that the world was not worthy of them, who were sawn asunder, slain with the sword, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated—was the world just to them? Almost the beginning of wisdom is to give up the idea and surrender the expectation that life will be just to us

Indeed it is much better that life should not be immediately just to the individual. Suppose that every time we did a good deed life should pay us a corresponding amount of happiness, so much good fortune for so much good conduct; would not our goodness speedily degenerate into mere prudent bargaining? Where, then, would be the moral heroes of the race who served honour in scorn of conse-

quence? They chose right for right's sake alone, saying with Esther, 'If I perish, I perish.' How stripped and bare would be our human story with such souls gone, who poured out service without asking pay, drank their hemlock, bore their cross, expected no justice for themselves! No, the beginning of great character, like the beginning of deep wisdom, lies in renouncing the expectation that life will be just. At any rate, without that there is no possibility of being a disciple of Jesus—'If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.'

4. Trouble nobly used can open up within us deep interior resources of spiritual power. We all must have seen this happen. Souls, who loved life as much as we do, stood face to face with towering and, it may be, fatal adversity, and, accepting it, releasing within themselves those hidden springs which wash the bitterness out of it, they moved into a deep serenity which gave to old phrases like 'the peace of God, which passeth all understanding,' fresh meaning. They triumphed in their troubles.

¶ One of the great world-figures of our generation, Cardinal Mercier, a spiritual warrior-saint, said, as he lay dying of cancer after a life which had had in it much tragedy as well as much heroism: 'Physical pain is such a petty thing. . . . I am content, very content. I thank the good Lord for having permitted me to follow Him, at least part of the way towards Calvary and to have suffered on the Cross. Suffering—that is the complete apostleship.'[1]

Experience worketh Hope

Rom. v. 3-5.—'Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.'

The finest thing about this golden chain, of which hope is the last link, is that it is not the utterance of a man who is philosophizing about life. St Paul is writing a calm statement of what he has found it possible to make a Christian life. He has found this possible. He has known tribulation, and yet he says, 'Let us glory in it,' because we can outlive it and become stronger men through it. He is not writing of other men's tribulations—a process which, since the days of Job's friends and before them, has made it easy for some to pronounce how sufferers should bear themselves. He is writing from among his own. He has had many; he remembers them because they gave him something he could gain nowhere else.

1. Let us glory in tribulations, not in a defiant way as though they did not matter, but because they do. The very point of glorying in them is because they matter so much—because they have such a rich contribution to bring to men who bear themselves rightly toward them. Nor is it even in the way in which a man may glory in them who has a good digestion and a short memory, who is able to put them behind him and go on his confident way. But let us be humbly grateful for them because of what they have made of us, because, without them, we should not have been even the Christian men we are.

¶ 'I can honestly say,' Stevenson once wrote to his father after some stormy experience, 'that all I have gone through has made me a little more like what you would have me to be.'

'Tribulation worketh patience.' This is more than mere passive, dogged endurance. It means more than gathering oneself together stolidly to endure the heavy blows of evil fortune. Even this is no lesson in life to be despised. But patience is the calm power to be ourselves, to retain our courage, to refuse to become impassive. And it follows from a man's discovery of the immense reserve power which lies in God and His grace. Many men have shuddered as they saw another man being heavily tried in this life, and have said, humbly, that in his place they could not have borne it. But when they came, in God's secret will, to be tried in their own way, they found, to their great surprise, that they were able to bear it. This discovery comes more through trouble than through anything else. It is only when we are not having everything our own way that we learn what God can help men to do and to bear. When we have learned this, and have learned to re-act on

[1] J. A. Gade, *The Life of Cardinal Mercier*, 282 ff.

life, and not merely to take it as it comes, let us glory in the tribulation which taught us the gift and power.

'And patience, experience.' The Revised Version translates this as 'probation,' which does not give much help, since it conveys no very clear idea. Perhaps we come nearest to what St Paul meant if we think of the word as meaning character. For there grows up through this discipline of life—this being hammered on the anvil of trial and not going to pieces under it—a personality. The man who is not at the mercy of anything, because he depends on the mercy of God; the man who gains the quiet sense that outward good and outward evil can neither foolishly elate nor unduly cast him down, because God is, and has been, his help—this seems the meaning. 'I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound; I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.' Does not St Paul supply his own interpretation of what he means by experience?—a soul which is self-poised amid the beating solicitations and fears of this world, and yet who is neither self-confident nor self-conceited, because what he has done has been through the grace of God.

¶ When the noble Stephen Colonna was a fugitive before the anger of Pope Boniface, and all his palaces and fortresses were destroyed, he was met one day on the road by one who, taunting him with his misfortunes, asked, 'Where are your strongholds now?' To which Stephen Colonna quietly replied, 'Here,' laying his hand upon his heart.

2. So far, we can all probably follow and agree. It is when the Apostle adds that experience worketh hope that we become puzzled. Is it not currently held that hope is almost the monopoly of youth, and is closely bound up with inexperience? Is it not hope which gives youth its wings, which afterwards are broken, and that men come to walk with stolid feet along dusty ways and to expect little out of life?

That is where St Paul is so Christian. He makes hope to be born, not out of ignorance, but out of experience—not from our want of knowledge, but from our abounding knowledge. For the larger is men's experience of life under the guidance of God, the larger is their expectation that they have not yet exhausted life's good. They learn that they may look for more, and may dare to expect and desire more. They learn hope.

Apart from Christian experience and the knowledge of God's mercy, in view only of a wholesome life, men have probably erred when they thought that hope was the first, rather than the last, gift bestowed on men. Youth has so much that it does not need this. In that period of their lives men fill their souls with enthusiasm, with dreams, with lyric passions. But there is no hopelessness like the hopelessness of youth. There is no despair like the despair which a trifling disappointment brings to a child. When we talk foolishly about the happiness of youth we have forgotten how black the world can look to one who has tasted the early amazement of a disappointment. Then the sun seems to have set at high noon and to have left no promise of to-morrow. The end of every incident seems the end of the world itself.

The power of hoping through everything, and refusing to be utterly cast down, the knowledge that the soul survives its adventures, and can even outlive its disappointments, the expectation of some good springing up on the ruins of a good which is lost—God keeps that good wine to men's later years. The experience of every wholesome and whole-hearted man can work in him hope. It is one of the gifts which come from a clean and brave life which has refused to be selfish in its outlook.

¶ Hugh Walpole paid the following tribute to his father, the Bishop of Edinburgh, on his death a few years ago. 'My father,' he said, 'was the happiest human being I have ever met. I do not know that he could be called an especially lucky or fortunate man. He rose to a position of honour and responsibility, but in that position there were many elements of irritation and difficulty. He had for many years much ill-health. He was always a man of small means. He was able to have very little "fun" outside his work.

'But he was a man of radiant happiness, as everyone recognized. This was partly, of course, because of his religion, which was simple, unquestioning and absorbing; but everything contributed to it. He would have been just as happy, I think, had he been the

humblest curate in the most obscure of country parishes.

'It is not achievement that brings happiness,' comments Hugh Walpole, 'although it may contribute to it; it is belief in the worthwhile quality of the stuff of life, however it is experienced, however encountered.'

To maintain this hope there goes many a gift. The man who has it may look back and see how never yet has God failed him, and how in even the sorest hours God's mercy has sustained his flagging spirit. He may realize how, out of each difficult passage and perplexity, he has drawn new courage to go on. He may see how the spirit abides undismayed, upheld on all its long and perilous way. But, better than all this, more potent to sustain hope is the love of God still shed abroad in our hearts. This is no mere memory of past goodness, great and helpful as this may be. It is not simply the recollection of a grace which has never failed. It is the truth of God's presence with us—a love which never departs. It is the reality which runs through our whole experience, linking it together, making its strange places plain.

And surely this is the greatest thing which even God is able to do for us—the greatest thing which our faith makes possible to us—that as we go on, this world, so vast, so mysterious, so difficult, becomes a home to men, and they are helped to realize that they live there in their Father's house. And so they go on to meet its strange passages, to enter its hidden and unknown ways, to thread its dark roads, not merely with courage, but with hope. For everywhere they expect the coming of God to meet them. His gifts will be new and strange and perplexing, but blessed, for they are the gifts of a Father.

Experience worketh our hope that God and God's world mean well with us when we are able to see above and within the love of God shed abroad in our hearts.

Love's Argument

Rom. v. 8.—'But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.'

In the text we are brought face to face with the Cross of Calvary, and we see that Cross standing in a light that glorifies it. Just as the wooden cross itself that stood upon the hill was touched with new and ever-varying glories, as the lights and shadows of the setting sun lingered for a moment on its bars, so to the eye of faith new glories fall upon the Crucifixion under the light of a Sun that never sets. When God sends forth His light, we see the Cross as the masterwork of grace. We see the Cross as the gateway into peace. We see the Cross as the type of self-denial. Over and above all that we see the Cross as the one triumphant argument for the love of God.

What is it to commend? It is far more than to recommend. It is to exhibit, to demonstrate, to prove. We shall look, then, at the Cross of Calvary as the unanswerable proof of the love of God.

1. *The Need for Proof of God's Love.*—There are some attributes of God that do not require proof. Some features of the Divine character there are, so universally conspicuous as to be self-evidencing. Think, for example, of God's *power*. If we believe in God at all we need no argument to convince us of His power. The mighty forces that engirdle us all cry aloud of that. The chambers of the deep, the chariot of the sun, are stamped with it. The devastating march of winter's storm, and, none the less, the timely calling of all the summer's beauty out of the bare earth—these things, and a thousand others, teach us the power of God. We would not need the Cross if all that had to be proved were the Divine omnipotence.

Or take the *wisdom* of God. Is any argument needed to assure us, in general, of that? None. 'Day unto day uttereth speech of it, and night unto night sheweth forth its glory.' Our bodies, so fearfully and so wonderfully made; our senses, linking us so strangely to the world without; our thought, so swift, so incomprehensible; and all the constancy of Nature, and all the harmony of part with part, and all the obedience of the starry worlds, and all the perfections of the wayside weed—these things, and a multitude of things like these, speak to the thinking mind of the wisdom of the God with whom we have to do.

Now many imagine that the love of God is similar to His power or His wisdom. They picture it as something luminous, written large on the working of His hands. But one thing we must all learn, if our faith is to be equal to the stress of things, is that this is not the Bible

standpoint. The love of God is not self-evident. On the contrary, if it be a fact, it is one against which a thousand facts seem ranged, and some overwhelming argument is needed to put these militating facts to flight.

¶ Robert Browning once remarked in a private conversation, 'The evidence of Divine power is everywhere about us; not so the evidence of Divine love.'

Think for a moment of some of the many things which seem to tell against the love of God. One is, for instance, the struggle for existence that is ceaselessly waged among all living creatures. To the seeing eye the world is a battle-field, and its children are fighting for their life. That is why Huxley wrote to Kingsley once, in a great discussion they were having, that he found no proof in Nature of what is called the Fatherhood of God.

¶ 'My father was a keen field naturalist,' writes Canon Peter Green, 'and from a little boy I was interested in natural history. Some time before I was twelve I found an exceptionally beautiful caterpillar. I placed it in a box, and fed it with the leaves of the plant on which I had found it. In due course it pupated. But when I looked for the chrysalis to produce a rare moth, there came out simply a number of small black flies. Some ichneumon fly had laid her eggs in the living body of the caterpillar, and when the grubs had hatched out, they had eaten out the inside of the still living creature. I can still recall the horror with which I listened to my father's explanation of what had happened, and though I have never lost my taste for reading books on natural history, and for studying Nature at first hand as far as my town life has rendered it possible, yet there has, I think, been as much pain as pleasure in the study.'

Then there are the facts of our experience, often so difficult to reconcile with love—the things that come to men who are God's children, which we should never dream of doing to *our* children. Providence is hard to understand, as when the chair is empty and the grave is full, and the one taken so desperately needed. How many have cried, and are crying this very hour, How can God love me when He so deals with me? And it is such things, things which seem so harsh, that call for special and tremendous proof for the doctrine that love is on the throne.

Now the wonderful thing about the Bible is that this proof is given in its pages. The Bible is a book for thoughtful people. It never takes the lovely summer day and says, 'Behold your proof that God is love.' It knows that before the beautiful day is ended there may be an awful earthquake in Japan. The Bible turns to the Cross of the Lord Jesus and finds *there* its unanswerable argument—'God demonstrateth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.' Once we have really understood the Cross, once we have grasped its inward spiritual meaning, there is one thing we can never do again—we can never again doubt the love of God.

Two things have to be said about this argument, and the first is that it is a *fact*. Love must be proved by deeds, and not by words. The loudest protestations may be empty. No mere profession of the lip will ever satisfy the heart that longs to know another's love. Love's argument is service. Love's commendation lies in sacrifice. And the proof of deeds is needed, above all, when by the proof of deeds love seems disproved. When there are facts fighting against the thought of love nothing but facts can prove it. See, then, the wisdom of our God. It is the facts of Nature and of life, of history and of experience, that make it so hard to believe His love. He knows it all, and so the proof He offers of His love is a fact too. All the dark facts in life God overwhelms by the one proof of the greatest fact in the world's story. God so loved the world, not that He said or thought, but that He gave.

¶ When we are asked, as we have been asked in *Robert Elsmere*, and in much literature that has preceded and followed it, why we do not get rid of the sternness and awfulness of religion and rest content simply with preaching the Fatherhood of God, our answer is plain. The one proof of God's love that will ever convince the world is the Cross of Christ. Said the great German, 'If I were God the sorrows of the world would break my heart.' He knew not what he said. The sorrows of the world *did* break the Heart of hearts. Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, even unto blood, even unto broken-heartedness.[1]

And then this argument is an *abiding* argument. The Apostle does not employ the past tense: he uses what we call the timeless present. There are proofs for the being and attributes of God which serve their purpose and then pass

[1] W. Robertson Nicoll.

away. Powerful for one generation, they are not infrequently powerless for the next. But the Scripture argument for the love of God is an argument that can never pass away, whatever changes fall upon the world. Knowledge may widen; thought may deepen; science may alter our outlook upon everything. We may break our way to such stupendous mysteries as our fathers never dreamed of. But always, unshaken and unshakable, stands, and will ever stand, the Cross of Christ, the one unanswerable proof that God is love.

2. *The Love which is Proved by the Cross.*—'God commendeth his own love to us,' so the text reads. Like life, love is of many kinds. What kind of love, then, is God's love proved to be from His commendation of it?

(1) *It is a love that thought no sacrifice too great.*—The surest test of love is sacrifice. We measure love, as we should measure her twin-brother, life, 'by loss and not by gain, not by the wine drunk, but by the wine poured forth.' Look at the mother with her child. She sacrifices ease and sleep, and she would sacrifice life, too, for her child, and she thinks nothing of it all, she loves her baby so. Think of the patriot and his country. He counts it joy to drain his dearest veins, he loves his land so well. Recall the scholar at his books. Amusements, intercourse, and sleep—he almost spurns them. His love for learning is so deep he hardly counts them loss. Yes, in the willingness to sacrifice all that is dearest lies the measure of noblest love.

Love ever gives,—
Forgives—outlives,—
And ever stands
With open hands.
And, while it lives,
It gives.
For this is Love's prerogative,—
To give,—and give,—and give.[1]

Turn now to Calvary, turn to the Cross, and by the sight of the crucified Redeemer there begin to learn the greatness of God's love. Did ever human love in the zeal of love make any sacrifice to be compared with that of God, when He gave His only begotten Son to shame and death, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish?

[1] John Oxenham.

(2) *It is a love that never sprang from the sight of anything lovable in us.*—Why do we love? Was it not some excellence or worth, or beauty, some charm that made an indefinable appeal, that caught and held the tendrils of our heart? We loved, and we loved only, because we found those worthy to be loved. And it is just here that, wide as the poles, God's love stands separated from all the love of men. 'God commendeth his love, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.'

¶ Li Hung Chang, China's great Viceroy, in his early manhood possessed the same ignorance and hatred of missionaries as prevailed generally throughout the country, although he revised his judgment in after years, as he became personally informed as to their work. In a letter written as a student at the Imperial Han-lin College, Peking, he said: 'It is a part of their teaching that the T'ien-fu [Heavenly Father] let His Son come on earth and die for wicked people. Such teaching! If they would say that He came and died for the good people it would sound sensible, even if the rest of their doctrines are too absurd for a man with brains to give a serious thought to. If the gods are good and want men to be good will they allow members of their families to be killed like criminals for the sake of criminals? It has been long intimated that most of these foreign devils are crazy, and I am beginning to believe it. But it is strange that they should be able to draw any of our people away from the old religion and old philosophy. I cannot understand how it is, but I am sure this crazy fad will die out.'[1]

Everyone
Will for his friend lay down
Some spark of love: but He alone
His enemies to crown
Refused not Death; so deep from high
His mercies did extend;
And if you ask the reason why,
'Twas mere for Mercy's end.[2]

(3) *It is a love splendid in its righteousness.*—Some of the saddest tragedies in human life spring from the moral weakness of the deepest love. Love is the mother of all tenderness, and tenderness shrinks instinctively from what is stern or rigorous. So love, from the excess of her fairest grace, often becomes the minister of

[1] *Memoirs of Li Hung Chang*, 23.
[2] Mildmay Lord Westmoreland.

ruin. How many a mother who would have laid her life down for her son, she loved him so, has only helped him down the road to ruin by the immoral weakness of her love.

But when we turn to Calvary, and to that awful death, we see a love as righteous as it is wonderful. Sin must be punished, although the Well-beloved has to die. And the Divine anger at iniquity must be revealed, though the curse fall upon the Son of God. The awful sight of that atoning death assures us of the perfect righteousness of God in the very moment that it assures us of His love. We see the Divine hatred of iniquity; we see the Divine need that sin be punished; we see the Divine sanction of everlasting law in the very glance that commends to us the everlasting love. And now with renewed trust we cast ourselves again into the arms of that heavenly love. With heart and soul and strength and mind we accept it as it is commended to us upon the Cross.

Progressive Christianity

Rom. v. 10.—'We shall be saved by his life.'

THERE are certain statements of Scripture which sum up and combine the essential truths and doctrines of our Christian faith in an exceptional way. St Paul is here, in a word, telling us the supreme truth of our faith, that, while the justifying work of Jesus Christ opens the way back to the Father's heart and home, His sanctifying grace works out that redemption in daily life. We are made like unto God by the Divine life of Christ working within us.

An impression prevails that the work of salvation is due exclusively to our Lord's death; that besides the Cross there is no other redemptive work that deserves mention. It is doubtless true that what our Lord did on Calvary was complete in itself. But when we turn to consider salvation in the fullest sense, the salvation that not only pardons but perfects, then other factors are necessarily brought in. For Christ not only died, but also rose, and now lives to save His people. That is what the text so positively asserts: 'We shall be saved by his life.'

He died that our sins might be condemned and forgiven, but He *lives* to save us from them.

¶ When the Northern part of the great American nation dedicated herself to buy the freedom of the slave the appeal went through America in those words:

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me:
As He died to make men holy, let us live to make men free!

And they did. But suppose one had gone to the Southern States, and found a man who had once been a slave, and now, instead of using his freedom, had become a laggard and an idler. How could an appeal be made to the soul of such a man? In this way only. 'America not only gave her life-blood to make you free, but she is going to live to keep you free, and to make you free, and by her schools, and by the privileges of her citizenship, touching your life here and there, it shall be said that she lives to make freedom a great and glorious reality to your race.'

1. It is of vital importance to remind ourselves of all that Christ's salvation is meant to be to us and to the world. It may sometimes seem that 'the average man to-day does not trouble much about his sins,' but that will only be before he has been convicted of sin. When, through the work of the Holy Spirit, he sees himself as he is in God's sight, then he cannot help troubling about them, and they weigh on his conscience as Bunyan's pilgrim found the load to weigh on his back. Then, by the mercy of God, he is enabled to see in Christ the One who opens for him the way back to God. This is what St Paul calls being 'reconciled to God by the death of his Son.' It is one of the outstanding truths of our faith by which we are enabled to proclaim hope to the sinner who has wandered farthest. But the gospel does not stop there, because man's need does not stop there. For it is when released from the outward burden that he feels the inward distress: 'O wretched man—who shall deliver me from the inward stress and pull of the sin that still besets me.' How shall habits and ties of the past loose their hold?

It is true that sin is condemned, and forgiven, in the Cross, and by faith in Christ any one of us can be forgiven, and become a 'new creature' in Christ Jesus. But that new life in a sense

brings out our sins—very much as the spring sunshine, which brings out the flowers in the garden beds, brings out the weeds as well. But the process of sanctification which makes the Christian life, is the discovery of, and the victory over, our sins—the sins of our nature, the sins of our temperament, the sins of our habit. God says that sin shall not have dominion over us, which means that the Christian life is a victory over the sin, the particular sin, which we recognize as ours.

The commonest form of sin is a habit which has got the mastery over us. But the all-important thing to be arrived at is that Jesus lives to break that habit, to give a complete victory over it. 'He shall be called Jesus, because he shall save his people from their sins,' does not mean that He is in some distant and abstract world, achieving a victory over sin in general, but that here, in this concrete world of our own personal existence, He is present to gain the victory, and to break that besetment which to us is absolutely unbreakable.

¶ Principal D. S. Cairns writes: 'There is a man who is living in the city from which I come who was a drunkard for many years. He was in prison one night, when Christ came to him in his cell. A few hours later, to use his own words to me, "I cam' oot o' twa prisons." Since then he has lived a perfectly sober life.' [1]

Thus in Christ's salvation the heart finds not only rest from sin's burden but new life in Christ. It realizes the first truth when it comes into contact with Christ, and the second day by day as life is lived in contact with Him. The first fact brings peace to the soul, the second becomes the means whereby deliverance and joy come to the daily life. Surely it is here that the distinction between the Christian life and the natural life has its origin. That distinction is not an artificial one, but one which arises from the very conditions of our relationship to Christ. Just as the tree in winter is dead because the sap has ceased to pulse through it, but bursts into leaf and fruit as the life of springtime courses through its branches, so is there the distinction between the self-centred life and the life that is freely open to the working of the Holy Spirit. Even in the Christian life the first truth may be fully perceived while the second is hardly realized. The life may be reconciled to God, but yet be without that victory over sin, that gladness and peace, of which St Paul so well knew the secret. To such an one comes St Paul's message, 'We shall be saved by his life.' The resources of Christ's Divine life are added, in response to our faith, to our own natural resources, and we realize at length that a new purity, power, and peace has been added to our own nature.

¶ God, who is an infinite abyss of mercy, thinks it not enough to pardon our sins, and receive us into His favour, unless He free our souls from all those disorders which sin had raised in it, by reforming and renewing the inward man. So that He heals our wounds; He loosens our chains; He eases us of the burthen of our evil desires; He frees us from the slavery and captivity of the devil; He restores us to a true liberty; He beautifies the soul anew; He settles peace and joy in our conscience again; He makes us forward to do what is good; and backward to do that which is evil; He strengthens us against temptations; in fine, He repairs our inward man with all its faculties after such a manner that the Apostle does not hesitate to call those who are thus justified, *New men and new creatures*.[1]

2. It is necessary to notice that the verb in the sentence is in the future tense—'We *shall* be saved.' Here is a stress that is too rare. The verb in the past tense is one with which we are all familiar. And yet in the New Testament, while salvation is mentioned as an experience, it is much more frequently referred to as a hope. Anyone who cares to make the search can see that the verb 'to save' is far oftener found in the future tense than in the past tense. There are the texts that speak of 'salvation' as something to be arrived at and hoped for. Speaking of his affliction, from his Roman prison Paul writes, 'For I know that this shall turn to my salvation.' Peter speaks of the 'salvation ready to be revealed at the last time,' and says that the regenerated ones are 'kept by the power of God *unto*' that salvation. He also urges, as the Revised Version translates him, that believers should 'desire the sincere milk of the word that they may grow thereby *unto* salvation.'

While salvation is an act it is also a process to be consummated. Thus, those who are saved should also make sure that they are being saved, and hope for the greater salvation still

[1] *The Reasonableness of the Christian Faith*, 158.

[1] St Louis of Granada.

ahead. Growth in grace, as every other growth, demands 'forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before.' 'We shall be saved,' as we 'press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.'

3. This emphasis suggests that salvation is a much greater thing than is generally imagined. How few think of it in terms of holy character and perfection of being. It has been limited to the blessings received when first we believe—pardon, peace, regeneration, justification.

See how the Apostle puts matters in the context. He writes to people whom he regards as 'being justified' and 'being reconciled,' and does so in order to urge them to hope confidently that they 'shall be saved.' 'Being now justified . . . we shall be saved'; 'Being reconciled, we shall be saved.' It almost sounds as if to be justified and reconciled merely prepared the way for salvation; that the chief, the most characteristic, part of salvation begins only when these are accomplished. It is at least far safer to regard as salvation what follows the initial blessings already referred to than to regard it as limited to them.

¶ Be sure to seek for holiness of heart and life only in its due order where God has placed it, after union with Christ, justification, and the gift of the Holy Ghost; and in that order seek it earnestly by faith, as a very necessary part of your salvation.[1]

4. It is a most arresting thought that He who once died for men has ever since His resurrection been living for His people. Once the Sacrifice upon the Altar, He is now the Priest in the Holiest. The Propitiator has become the Intercessor. The place of the Interceding Priest in the economy of redemption is not so well understood as the place of the Expiating Offering. Lev. xvi. makes instructive reading in this connection. There we find in detail the ritual of the annual great Day of Atonement. The high-priest ministered not only at the altar in the court, but also entered the Holiest of All. The sprinkling of the blood upon the Mercy Seat was as important as its shedding upon the altar. The priest made effective all that the altar had made possible.

[1] Walter Marshall.

O Thou, before the world began,
Ordain'd a sacrifice for man,
And by th' Eternal Spirit made
An Offering in the sinner's stead;
Our everlasting Priest art Thou,
Pleading Thy Death for sinners now.

Thy Offering still continues new
Before the Righteous Father's view;
Thyself the Lamb for ever slain,
Thy Priesthood doth unchanged remain;
Thy years, O God, can never fail,
Nor Thy blest work within the veil.[1]

It is a truth of immense importance that salvation following its initial blessings is contact and communion with God. We read that 'Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might *bring us to God*.' 'Through him we have *access* . . . *unto the Father*.' Here is an indispensable condition of salvation—access to and fellowship with God. On the ground of Christ's work on the Cross He, as it were, introduces every believer into the presence of God that in that presence the further work of his salvation may go on. Nowhere save in the presence and fellowship of God do the redemptive powers that cleanse and sanctify operate. 'He is able to save to the uttermost those who *come to God* by him.'

This, then, is the progressive concern of Christianity. It needs that Christ should not only die for us. It needs that, having died, He shall go on living for us. 'He ever liveth to make intercession for us.'

No one will be left to fight the battle of life alone. Strength will be given to him all through, because of that great love of God which was first manifested in the Cross, and which will prove itself to the end of the journey by the supply of all such help as is necessary for the daily need. In the living of the Christian life, which seems to be so difficult, and which sometimes seems to be, and indeed is, quite impossible for us if we attempt it in our own strength, we have God with us, making it His business, His work, to bring us all at last to the end in holiness and peace.

¶ A friend of mine had a rather self-important tiny daughter. He was much concerned that she should grow up to be a gentle and nobly

[1] Charles Wesley.

poised and unselfish woman. One day he took her for a climb in the White Mountains of New England. Choosing a difficult trail, he suggested that she go first. He could follow. Right zestfully she began to climb. She was glad to show her father how strong and capable she was. But the trail grew steeper and more difficult. She slipped and fell. The thorns cut her. Tears came on her cheeks. Still she persisted. She had a strong will, and she was determined not to fail. But at last the task became completely impossible, and after the most cruel fall of all she turned, weeping, to her father. He took her tenderly in his arms, and they climbed to the top of the mountain together. He never had intended her to do it alone.[1]

The Moral Implications of the Resurrection

Rom. v. 10.—'Saved by his life.'

The Christian religion is based on the belief that the Lord Jesus Christ, who was slain so long ago in Jerusalem, is to-day alive, vested with the powers of God, and controlling all human events and human progress in the interest of righteousness. If we could preserve a constant realization of the fact we should be constantly at the source of cheer and hope. We do have—but, alas, intermittently—some sense of His living power to-day; but there are a good many reasons—some of them intellectual, some of them moral—why the belief in the resurrection of our Lord does not always amount to a vivid realization of His presence.

But there is one reason that might be mentioned. No miracle or portent, like the rising from the dead even of the Son of God, will continue to secure and maintain any man's faith unless he sees that miracle in some close connection with the moral experiences of his daily life. Now in the New Testament the resurrection of Christ is not presented to us as a portent to be stared at, but as the turning-point in the moral history of the world, and as having the closest bearing upon the moral facts of our experience day by day.

Too much room has been given to analogies in regard to the Resurrection. It may be helpful for little children to speak about the butterfly and the chrysalis, but what one laments in that is that there is no dwelling, as the New Testament dwells, not simply on the startling nature of the portent of Jesus rising from the dead into newness of life—but that there is no emphasis, as the New Testament lays emphasis, on the moral significance, the moral implicates, of the Resurrection.

In the Epistle to the Romans there are certain passages in which Paul shows the close connection between the rising of our Lord from the dead and our moral experiences day by day. And it is as we lay hold of that connection between our Lord's resurrection from the dead and our moral experiences day by day that we gain a steady and helpful, a cheering, belief that our Lord is alive, and that because He lives we shall live also.

1. *The Resurrection as a Triumph of Personal Holiness.* (Rom. i. 3, 4.)

St Paul here says that the Lord was 'declared to be the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.' It means that the resurrection of our Lord is in line with, and is the outcome of, the energetic spirit of holiness that dwelt in Him. Consider what that means. It links the resurrection of Jesus with the character of Jesus; with that life of holy intimacy with God which He daily lived. It declares that every moment of that holy friendship with God was full of resurrection power. His abandonment to the Will of God, His being absorbed in the Divine will, was daily resurrection work, and it was the secret and pledge that death could not possibly long hold Him. He rose from the dead by a power which was agreeable to, and in line with, the spirit of holiness in Him.

Is not that in line with our Lord's own statement regarding the resurrection? When the people taunted Him, and scoffingly asked Him about the resurrection, He said this: 'Have ye not read that God said, I am the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob?' That is to say, 'I am the One who has entered into a covenant of friendship with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.' God does not enter into covenant relations with friends who disappear. God is the God not of the dead, but of the living. God's friends do not die. The friendship of God makes a man live. Between Christ's life of intimacy with God day by day and His rising from the

[1] L. H. Hough, *The Eyes of Faith*, 67.

dead there is, according to the Holy Scripture, the directest causal connection.

Now this truth was given to us not to use simply as speculative material, but that we might consider this astounding thought, that in every moment of intimacy with the living God, in every day of communion, there abides resurrection power. Life, with all that life means, is the issue, the outcome, of those hours of prayer, of fellowship with our Lord, which we have enjoyed here. Our communion with God here is the pledge of our persistence unto eternal life. In every moment of the life of holiness there is death-destroying power.

¶ Already in the Old Testament we see men wistfully laying hold of the faith in immortality as involved in the very nature of religion as life in fellowship with God. The man whom God in His love has called into communion with Himself must, it was felt, be His for ever. Only through Jesus and His resurrection, however, did this elemental religious faith or hope become an assured or certain fact. For His was a life lived, as no other life in human history, in unbroken fellowship with the Father. In Him, therefore, and in His experience in contact with death, we have the great test case, what science calls the 'crucial instance' of death's reaction on a life lived in this relationship. So that in the resurrection of Jesus we have the final confirmation and guarantee of the faith in immortality involved in the life of filial fellowship with God.[1]

2. *The Resurrection as the Proof of Man's Redemption.* (Rom. iv. 25.)

Christ was delivered as substitute for us, but that is not what is taught in this verse. The preposition translated 'for' is the same in both phrases, and it means at least this: 'Who was delivered for (in connection with) our offences, and was raised again for (in connection with, or to assure us of) our justification.' At certain stages of a man's course in penitence he is glad to accept a simple bald statement, 'The Lord hath put away thy sin,' and ask no question. But later on there may come over him an access of incredulity, or at least a desire to know further on what grounds he is forgiven, and what is the assurance of forgiveness. For example, a man who had been condemned to death, and who has received a pardon, when the warder burst into the cell, saying, 'You are pardoned,' would accept that fact, and for the moment enjoy to the full the sense of release. But he might afterwards ask—'Is it all perfectly certain; have you any document that will assure me that my pardon has been ratified by the authorities and is authoritative?' He wants to know the grounds on which he is forgiven. And we want to know whether it is true that we are pardoned, and whether it is not simply a subjective feeling, some sort of feeling of exhaustion, simply the exhaustion of penitence being mistaken for forgiveness.

But, according to the New Testament, the resurrection of our Lord is the Divinely appointed assurance that there is an objective reality corresponding to our sense of forgiveness. And it comes about in this way. His death is the proof of His interest in us and His sacrifice for us; but His being raised from the dead by God is the proof that God justified Jesus in that peculiar line of action which He adopted. Jesus said, 'I will save men from sin'; and to do that He went to His death.

But was He justified in so doing? The raising from the dead is God's announcement that God ratified that act of the Lord Jesus Christ. And if He was justified in offering His sacrifice for us, the proof of His justification is the proof of ours; that we also are forgiven is announced to us by the raising from the dead of Jesus Christ.

3. *The Resurrection and Everyday Spiritual Experience.* (Rom. vi. 5, 6.)

That experience has a sort of dualism in it. On the one hand there is the old *ego* in the Christian man still subject to the powers of sin. On the other hand there is the new self which abides in God and holds fellowship with God almost as though sin were not. Now with that curious double experience in the heart St Paul connects the facts of the resurrection of our Lord. And he connects it with that experience in three different ways. First of all by way of analogy. Here is the genuine analogy with the resurrection from the dead: not in the facts of the natural life, but in the facts of the moral life. The only way we can express it is in the words of Pascal: 'It is the lot of every Christian to have those things happen to him which happened to the Lord Jesus Christ.' The facts of the Crucifixion,

[1] J. M. Shaw, *The Christian Gospel of the Fatherhood of God*, 152.

of the burial, of the rising again from the dead, even of the ascension to the right hand of God—these things, according to St Paul, are, as it were, a drama of the spiritual processes through which men have to pass: they are analogies of spiritual experience day by day.

But it is not only an analogy; it is also a pledge of the issue of these our so contradictory experiences. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is a sort of picture of Christian progress, foreshortened and telescoped. As He lives, 'free from, apart from, sin,' so shall we one day be clean from all trace of our connection with this sin that soils and stains even our highest and holiest moments. And of that glorious issue the rising from the dead of our Lord is the God-given pledge.

And it is not only analogy and pledge; it is the source of our victory as well. For it is because He lives that we shall live also. Out from His risen life to-day there issue forth forces which lift us up from the power of sin into the life of communion with God.

¶ I heartily believe, though I cannot understand the boundaries of will and inspiration, that what God will do for us at last is infinitely beyond any greatness we could gain, even if we could will ourselves from the lowest we could be, into the highest we can imagine. It is essential divine life we want. . . . We are His, and He will do His part, which is no part but the all in all.[1]

4. *The Resurrection and the Body Glorified.* (Rom. viii. 11.)

Christ has now become in His risen life a quickening Spirit, shedding forth His own Divine life into the lives of men, and that life penetrates through their moral and spiritual life, and even into their bodily life; so complete is the infiltration of that Divine life into our life here that the bodily life, in spite of the dissolution of the flesh, is reconstituted, so that the unimpaired personality, in the fullness of its powers, rises out of this imperfect and dangerous life through which we are passing into full and satisfactory and joyous life hereafter. 'The Spirit of him that raised Jesus from the dead shall even quicken your mortal bodies.'

As our Lord Himself rose victorious over the dead, not His spirit rising only, but spirit, soul, and body rising uninjured and unimpaired—nay, with capacities and new powers—so our bodies, too, shall rise out of this initial, alphabetic, elementary experience which we call life—though it may be taken from us at any moment—into an experience that is large and full, in which the body will not be the rebel against the spirit but will obey the dictates of the spirit, and we shall have enlarged opportunities and enlarged capacities, and shall pass out of these shadows into what the New Testament calls the life that is life indeed.

Oh, new limbs are ready,
Free, pure, instinct with soul through every nerve,
Kept for us in the treasuries of God.
They will not mar the love they try to speak,
They will not fail my soul, as these have done![1]

When one remembers such thoughts as these one can face life with a fuller sense of what Paul's great four words mean—saved by His life.

[1] George Macdonald.

The First Sin

Rom. v. 19.—'For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous' (R.V.).

1. THE sins of the fathers are visited upon the children. Every son of Adam begins the world with his powers of resisting evil impaired, and with a will which is weaker in the effort after holiness than might be expected from a being who was made in the image and after the likeness of God. Science is here in the strictest harmony with Scripture, as, indeed, we generally find to be the case when both have received their true interpretation. For it is the teaching of science no less than the teaching of St Paul, no less than the teaching of the early chapters of the Bible, that the full explanation of our weaknesses and thoughts and deeds of evil would demand the retracing of our pedigree through our fathers and forefathers until we come to the very beginning of human history. Not one sin of all those thousands who have gone before, whose blood is in our veins, but has left its mark on our character for evil. The sin of the first of our race communicated a universal infection. 'Through one man,' says St Paul, 'sin entered into the world'; it came to stay.

[1] Charles Kingsley.

We need not perplex ourselves by asking how much of the narrative of the Fall is literal history, how much is early myth recorded by the sacred writer for our learning as containing a deep spiritual truth. This is certain at least, that man is not in the condition which was the Divine intention for him; he has not fulfilled the splendid promise of his youth. He has fallen. How that fall came about it is idle to conjecture. We can form but very inadequate pictures of the condition of primeval man. That the ideas of good and evil as they arose must have been associated at first with the simplest and most elementary duties seems evident of itself; and so the narrative describes it. Good was obedience to a known law; evil was disobedience, conscious violation of such law. Whether the law be that of a highly developed and sensitive conscience, or whether it be an elementary prohibition, could not matter either to us or to the first members of our race. Sin, in one, and that perhaps the most important, of its aspects, is conscious disobedience to a law whose authority we recognize as binding us. Such disobedience will weaken not only the will of the sinner himself, but the will of his descendants when their turn comes to combat the forces of evil. And this weakness and waywardness of the will in its warfare with the passions is what has been called by theologians, though the phrase has no Scriptural authority, *original sin*.

¶ It is to be remembered that what science teaches us is that the history of man has been a history of development, but it does not and could not teach that this development has proceeded along the best conceivable lines. It is no postulate of modern philosophy that this is the best of all possible worlds. And the Christian doctrine that man as he presents himself to us in history and in life, though his education through the centuries has been Divinely ordered, is not in the condition which was the Divine intention for him, is a doctrine which receives verification from daily observation. The Divine will has been thwarted, so to speak, by the perversity of the human will. And this has been recognized as the key to the problem of evil by men of all races and creeds.[1]

¶ Browning gives as one of his reasons for believing that the Christian Faith is true that it teaches this truth. It is at the close of 'Gold Hair,' the story of a girl who, in spite of her reputation for sanctity, clung to her gold. Her secret store of golden coins was hidden in her golden hair, and after death discovered in her tomb. Browning tells her story, and concludes thus:

I still, to suppose it true, for my part,
  See reasons and reasons; this, to begin:
'Tis the faith that launched point-blank her dart
  At the head of a lie—taught Original Sin,
The Corruption of Man's Heart.

2. Man is the one being who begins his life in the world with enfeebled powers, with evil tendencies that prompt him to seize every occasion of evil. He alone has missed, not only happiness, but the perfection of his nature. Shelley was right:

The universe,
In Nature's silent eloquence, declares
  That all fulfil the works of love and joy,—
All but the outcast, Man.

Men do suffer in body and soul through that which was no fault of theirs. But it is a fact which must not be isolated from the other facts of human history. Man's inheritance is not only one of woe; it is more surely one of blessing. If man, speaking generally, inherits evil, he inherits good too, and in far richer abundance. With the suffering that is sometimes entailed on him come also the unspeakable blessings of civilized surroundings, of a higher moral tone in society, of a larger and more healthy environment. Few will accept the conclusion of the pessimist that evil more and more preponderates over good. It is quite the other way. We owe our ancestors, on the whole, a blessing rather than a curse. Individual cases there may be of hardship, but they only serve to bring into relief and prominence the general progress towards good.

But the taint of sin is present, despite all our hopes for the future. Whence comes it? Are we to regard it as a Divine punishment? No; it is the consequence of the unity of mankind. 'Through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners.' Could we explain it better? We suffer through Adam's sin, inasmuch as we are bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. We suffer doubly, alike in our bodies and in our souls.

[1] J. H. Bernard, in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, i. 844.

(1) We suffer in our *bodies*. It is not obscurely hinted by St Paul that physical disorder is the offspring of moral disorder; 'death came through sin,' he says. It may be a question whether St Paul has literally adopted here the doctrine which explained physical death as the fruit of sin, or whether we are bound to pursue his theory into such details. But, at any rate, even if we find ourselves unable to believe that before sin there was no death in the world, it is in this direction that the greatest thinkers of all ages have looked for the solution of the problem of evil. The true significance of pain may be that it is the symbol and the token of sin; the suffering in the world may be the consequence, though not the punishment, of Adam's transgression.

¶ You have nowadays all sorts of schemes for making bad men good, and good men better. The world is full of such schemes, some of them wise and some foolish; but to be wise they must all go on the principle of lessening misery by lessening *sin*; so that the old weaver at Kilmarnock, who, at a meeting for abolishing slavery, the corn laws, and a few more things, said, 'Mr Chairman, I move that we abolish Original Sin,' was at least beginning at the right end.[1]

(2) We suffer in our *souls*. That is more serious, more dreadful. The infection of sin is with us, for as members of the great human family we have shared in Adam's sin. We have inherited the taint, although we are not responsible for it; it has never been in our power to refuse the inheritance. And so we see that the really practical question for us all is as to the source and the measure of our power of resisting this deadly tendency. There would be inequity, indeed, if the tendency were irresistible. For then men would be the victims of their lineage, the sport of circumstance; they could in no sense be counted responsible without the gravest injustice. Can it, then, be resisted, and how?

3. The answer given by St Paul to this problem of the ages is one full of joyful confidence. What does he say? 'As through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous.' In Adam the taint, in Christ the remedy; in Adam the inherited slavery of the will, in Christ the grace which frees us from these bonds. *In* Christ the grace, provided that we deliberately take it for our own. For as we are nowhere told that Adam's sin is imputed to us without the co-operation of our own wills, so we are nowhere told—and we dare not persuade ourselves into believing—that Christ's righteousness is imputed to us without a conscious acceptance of His grace. There is a sense in which it is true to say that man is forgiven *for Christ's sake*; but it is worth our while to remember that the phrase does not occur in the New Testament. God *in Christ forgave you* is St Paul's message of peace. So as in Adam is our sorrow, in Christ is our hope.

That is the true bearing of the law of inheritance on the Christian life. Sin cannot be transferred from one to another, as suffering can. We inherit the awful consequences of the Fall; the sins of our fathers are visited upon us. We inherit, too, the graces of the Incarnation, the gifts of the Second Adam. As we make Adam's sin our sin, we die; as we make the perfect life of Christ our life, we live. In Christ has mankind been summed up; as from Adam all men derive their being. And we dare not forget that the most stupendous illustration in history of that law of inheritance by which the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children, by which gifts of blessing are handed down to a thousand generations, is found in the Atoning Death and Passion of that Patient Son of Man who was in truth the Strong Son of God.

¶ Speaking of the human genealogy of Christ, in which there are instances of good sons following bad fathers, and good fathers succeeded by bad sons, amongst other instances of good succeeding good, and bad, bad, Fuller remarks, 'Lord! I find the genealogy of my Saviour strangely chequered. . . . I see, Lord, from hence that my father's piety cannot be entailed; that is bad news for me. But I see also that actual impiety is not always hereditary; that is good news for my son.'

[1] J. Brown, *Horæ Subsecivæ*.

Grace Abounding

Rom. v. 20.—'Where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly' (R.V.).

THE text suggests a battlefield; it tells of a conflict that has been proceeding since time began, which is proceeding now, which is proceeding in our own hearts. It mentions the

combatants. The combatants are *sin* on the one side and *grace* on the other, and the prize for which they fight is the soul of man.

Sin and grace, according to the Apostle, are both of them tremendous energies. Sin, in these solemn and magnificent chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, is more than an act; it is more than a condition; it is a *power*. Paul personifies sin, and speaks of it as dwelling in man, using his members as instruments of unrighteousness, enslaving him. Sin, according to the Apostle, is a terrible enemy, who corrupts men's souls, smites them with cruel wounds, and drags them down to death and despair.

But sin is not left to work its deadly will upon men unchecked. Over against sin, and opposing it, stands grace. And grace, too, according to the Apostle, is an energy. Grace, in its central and essential meaning, stands for the undeserved, unmerited love which God has shown towards sinful men. But that love is no mere limp and placid sentiment, it is a mighty force; it is a veritable tide of power, working ever for the healing and emancipation and redemption of man. And of these two forces, the one working for man's ruin, the other for man's redemption, the saving and redeeming force is the stronger. 'Where sin abounded, there grace did abound more exceedingly.'

¶ 'I saw also,' says George Fox in his *Journal*, 'that there was an ocean of darkness and death: but an infinite ocean of light and love, which flowed over the ocean of darkness. In that also I saw the infinite love of God.'

1. *The Triumph of Grace.*—The statement of the text accounts for the brave and invincible hopefulness of the Bible. It accounts for the fact that Christianity is a gospel, that it is good news. The Bible does not shut its eyes to sin and its ruthless and destructive power; but opposed to sin it sees grace, and grace, it proclaims, is mightier even than sin. There is nothing about the Bible more noteworthy and characteristic than its stubborn and almost obstinate optimism. G. F. Watts has pictured Hope as a shrinking, blindfolded female figure with just one string left on her broken harp. But the Hope of the Bible is young and strong, and his eyes are like stars, and his face like the sun shining in his strength, and with bold and vigorous hand he strikes full and exultant chords from a harp that has not lost a string. The Bible never doubts but that clouds will break; never dreams, though right be worsted, wrong will triumph; holds 'we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better, sleep to wake.'

Of all the people in the world the Christian is the only one who has a right to preach good cheer to man. Paul came into close contact with the deadly sickness and sin of the world; he saw it in all its naked hideousness; he has given us a picture of it in the first chapter of this letter to the Romans, that eclipses in its terrible realism and lurid horror anything that Juvenal ever wrote. And yet this man, who saw so clearly, and had seen so much of the world's wickedness and woe, this man who had felt the pressure and burden of human sin, this man who had dwelt in lustful Antioch and pagan Ephesus and notorious Corinth, went through life with a singing heart and a shining face. For he saw more than sin at work; he saw grace at work as well; and when he thought of the omnipotent energies of God's grace he said to his own soul, and he said to his fellow-labourers when cast down, 'Be of good cheer. Where sin abounds, there grace doth abound more exceedingly.'

The Bible does not arrive at its radiant hopefulness by ignoring any of the unpleasant and distressing facts of life. It notes them every one. If it were not paradoxical we might say that the Bible arrives at its optimism by way of pessimism. There is a certain type of optimism which is utterly superficial and worthless. There are people who talk in gay and airy fashion about everything being as it should be in the best possible of worlds, simply because, like that ancient king who refused to allow a man in sackcloth to come within his line of sight lest he should be led to think of sorrow and death, they live in a fool's paradise, and decline to come face to face with the woe and wretchedness of men.

Nowhere will you find statements more expressive of the world's wretchedness and woe than in the Bible. But the Bible, for all that, is not a pessimistic book; its dominant note is not that of melancholy or despair; through its pessimism it emerges into a calm, confident, and courageous optimism, for, strong though the destructive power of sin be, the healing and redeeming power of grace is mightier still.

2. *The Universality of Grace.*—Sin is universal. Sin 'abounds.' Sin is a disease from which all men suffer. In the first five chapters of this Epistle Paul has proved that the Gentile has fallen into the snare and the condemnation of sin. He proves that even the Jew, the son of the Covenant, is not exempt from the universal experience of bondage through sin. He argues that all men have come into the imprisonment and entanglement and alienation from God that are inevitable wherever sin comes.

And there are many witnesses to confirm this Scriptural account. Every religion deals with man as a transgressor. There is absolute unanimity in this in every grade of religious belief and ordinance. Not religion only, but every organisation of human life has to begin by reckoning with guilt. Laws are passed, penalties fixed, and prisons built on this assumption wherever men are found.

The development of modern thought has brought confirmation to many phases of Biblical teaching about sin. The orthodox interpretations of facts may still be despised, but to the facts themselves it bears ungrudging witness. Theological formulæ appear under such scientific terms as heredity, solidarity, and the survival of the fittest. They teach no more than the Scriptures have taught from the beginning that 'All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.'

¶ Adam's sin was the sin of the race. It is the conception of solidarity, and corresponds with real facts. The isolation of the individual is an abstraction. None of us stands alone. What we are and what we do is largely affected by the forces of heredity and environment, that is, by the place we occupy in the structure of society as an historical whole. For good or ill we start with predispositions which are the result of lives lived by other people. There are outstanding representative men in history whose words and deeds have perpetuated their influence through whole periods and whole civilizations. If we think of Adam as a man representative of all humanity we approach Paul's thought. Adam is a name which stands to him for the corporate personality of mankind. It is enough for him and for us to recognize that the wrongdoing of an individual is not an isolated phenomenon, but part of a corporate, racial wrongness which affects human society.[1]

[1] C. H. Dodd, *Romans* (Moffatt's Commentary), 79.

But over against the universality of sin Paul puts the universality of God's grace. There is a power as ubiquitous as, and more mighty than, the destructive power of sin, and that is the healing and redeeming power of God's grace.

Where it is said, 'sin abounds,' the idea is that of increase. Paul looked down stream and said, 'Sin abounds,' which does not simply mean that there is plenty of it, but that it is growing, filling up. Paul's word describes sin's development and growth. That is Paul's outlook, and it is a dark outlook on human history. But if we look again over human history, he says, we see that grace surpasses it, so that at last the victory is to be with grace and not with sin.

There is no fear of exhausting the supply. There is 'grace' enough and to spare. Wherever sin is to be found grace is to be found also. Wherever sin has gone to steal and kill and destroy grace goes to restore and heal and redeem. 'There is grace to cover every sin.'

Thy goodness and Thy truth to me,
To every soul, abound,
A vast unfathomable sea,
Where all our thoughts are drowned.

3. *The Reign of Grace.*—The result of sin, according to these chapters, is death. That is where sin ends. It so rules that it corrupts the whole personality, and sinful man is dead even while he lives. But death is not the last word. 'As sin reigned in death even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Grace not only saves, but rules, establishes a new order, a new kingdom. It reigns through righteousness. Righteousness means rightness of relationship, rightness of adjustment, rightness of life. Forgiveness without cleansing would not cover man's need. The work of grace must be at least co-extensive with the work of sin. A sacrifice at the right hand of God secures our standing, but unless righteousness be implanted as well as imputed, we would still be in the bondage of sin. Christ in the heavens justifies; Christ in the heart saves. Where sin had its seat His throne is established. The will is surrendered, the heart cleansed, the desire changed, and the nature renewed.

The restored order in the man secures the restoration of the true order in the world. The new man necessitates a New Heaven and a New

Earth. Personal regeneration is followed by social reconstruction. The world cannot be saved on the low level of a religion that becomes a mere machine. It is grace we need, a Divine spontaneity. This world is in chaos and confusion. Nobody knows whether it is a conflagration, and the approach of the end, or whether it is the beginning of a new era, the dawn of a new day. It all depends. There is no salvation but of God. There is no gospel save through grace. There is no effectiveness but through righteousness.

So comes this complete word, the only adequate word: sin abounded, but grace abounds more exceedingly in order that grace may reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

¶ John Bunyan describes the passing of old Honest. 'When the day that he was to be gone was come, he addressed himself to go over the river. Now the river at that time overflowed its banks in some places; but Mr Honest in his lifetime had spoken to one Good-conscience to meet him there, the which he also did, and lent him his hand, and so helped him over. The last words of Mr Honest were, Grace reigns! So he left the world.'

Our Hours of Insight

Rom. vi. 3.—'Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?'

1. If we asked ourselves why the life of ordinary Christian people differs so little from that of those round about them who do not even profess to be Christians, what should we say is the real answer? Well, no doubt we might answer the question in many different ways, but one real reason is that we generally live, not up to our highest times but down to our lowest times, that we do not try to conform our conduct to what we see in our hours of insight. If only we could learn to live up to these it would make an entire difference in every part of our lives. It is a thing that can be done if we will but do it. We can set before ourselves ideals and standards of conduct in our times of insight, when we see the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. We know that

> Tasks in hours of insight willed
> Can be through hours of gloom fulfilled,

and yet how little we endeavour to do so at all. Commonly our method of living is just the reverse. When the times of insight come we enjoy them and thank God for them, but we come down from them and allow our standards of life to become ordinary everyday standards.

So it is that St Paul places before the Romans this great lesson—that salvation comes from God alone, that even at the best we are unprofitable servants. He has taught them to see that all they can do will be nothing, and can be nothing whatever, but a meagre outcome of the free principle of grace already given them, so that at their best they fall infinitely short of what they might be. And then he deals with the possible objection that might be raised. If it be the case that salvation comes from God, and that all grace is the free gift of God, may we not continue in sin so that grace may more abound? And how does St Paul answer that objection? He says: 'You cannot continue in sin that grace may abound, because by the very fact of continuing in sin, by the fact of your being satisfied with any level lower than the highest, you place yourselves outside the sphere of grace altogether. For surely you must remember that when you were baptized you were made partakers of the death of Christ Jesus, that as Christ was raised up from the dead, so you might live in newness of life. That is the point for you to start from: if you start from any other point you have not made a right beginning.' So he tells them at the conclusion of his argument, 'Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.' You will sin again and again, but, after all, everything depends upon whether you make it your object to live up to your highest ideals, or down to something lower.

2. The problem does not strike us twentieth-century people in precisely the same way as it struck those Jewish Christians in Rome. We are not tempted to say, 'Let me go on sinning that grace may abound.' That would offend our consciences. But do we look to be baptized into the life of Christ without being baptized into the death of Christ? Do we not continually hope for a religion that somehow or other shall put the Cross into the background, not beginning with the fact that our baptism is

a baptism into the death of our Lord Jesus Christ? But if we would see our life as it is and learn to live as Christ would have us live, we must start from that point. There is no Christianity without the Cross.

¶ 'It was not for nothing,' writes Bishop Collins of Gibraltar, 'that baptism was always administered on Easter Eve at first; that to this day in many parts of the East the font is built in the shape of a grave and is laid open on Easter Eve, even when there is no baptism, that every Christian present may once more be taught to recognize that he is baptized into the death of Christ.'

Many things make it hard for us to realize this. To begin with, we are always suspicious, and rightly suspicious, of those who start by telling us that we must cut off this and that and the other. If there is anything that we have learned in these days it is to realize that the world is God's world. There has been no parent of unbelief more fruitful at the present day than the sectarianism of Christians—that tendency to shut off parts of the world and to say they are evil in themselves. That Manichæan tendency of old is as present to-day as ever it was. There are still those who would tell us that men are saved by renouncing this and taking that up instead. And there always will be those who will answer, 'No, I prefer this; I will not give up the good I have for some other possible good'; and, after all, there is no conclusive argument one could give why they should not be right, if Christianity meant marking off parts of God's world as His and the rest as belonging to the evil one. It is no wonder that such a faith is one of the greatest hindrances to the spread of the gospel, for a mutilated gospel always has been, and must be, lacking in anything like real missionary power.

Then there is another obstacle which presents itself to our minds, even when we do not formulate it to ourselves, as an obstacle to the way of the Cross. 'My nature teaches me that I should enjoy this and that,' so we say. 'And therefore where nature leads me I will follow, and I shall be following aright. Nature teaches me I should develop my intellectual powers, and I will do so. Nature teaches me I should enjoy life, and I will do so.' So we feel inclined to say to ourselves, and where is the flaw? Surely it is in the fact that nature, as we see it, is fallen and perverted. The true nature of every being, as Aristotle said, is that which it is destined to become.

3. And thus the real reason for self-denial is not that we may cut off, but that we may abound. We are to cut off the things that hinder, to cut off the things that have become temptations to one or another, in order that we may enjoy more fully. And when we look at it, do we not see that even in the sphere of Nature the method of unlimited self-indulgence is the method that leads to failure, and not to success? Leave your garden to grow quite freely, allow it to blossom as it will, and what is the end? The weeds grow more quickly than the flowers and choke them, and all is rankness and decay. So, develop the life of the body at the expense of everything else—and what is the result? A mutilated life, infinitely poorer than it was ever before. Or make personal enjoyment the aim of your life, and what is the end of it? Those who endeavour first of all to enjoy themselves do not find that they succeed. As they go on the search seems to be a search for what evades them, and they find powers and capacities worn out and tired.

¶ Lord Byron once cried out tragically about his incapacity to feel as he had once felt and to weep as he had once wept. He had sought sensations and vivid experiences in the very way which made him lose them. What he thought was a convention proved to be a part of the very structure of life itself.[1]

¶ Mr T. S. Eliot, writing of our low desires and tastes, says, 'I have perceived their transience and unsatisfactoriness and how the horror of satiety is far beyond the famine of deprivation.' Self-indulgence is not finally worth while. But there is a certain tension of self-mastery which gives a zest to joys which it is ours to take. There are joys to be found in fellowship with Christ which are not to be compared with the joys of pampered ease.[2]

Look wherever you will the way of self-denial is the way of growth. In study, is success attained by merely skimming through books that please us? No; the way of success in study is the way of self-denial and not of self-indulgence. Even in the life of the affections, what becomes of the affections if they are allowed a free course? We know the end

[1] L. H. Hough, *The Eyes of Faith*, 45.
[2] James Reid, *The Springs of Life*, 273.

of it. It all leads to passion, to jealousy, to the grave.

¶ One of the great Greek stories enshrines this truth. Stung by a serpent, Eurydice dies, and is carried to Hades. There she is followed by Orpheus, her husband, whose music charms the dead and those who have the powers of death. Orpheus is allowed to take back his bride, but one condition is imposed. He must restrain himself, must not look upon the face of his beloved until he sees it in the light of earth. But love was impatient and could not wait the fitting time, and snatching prematurely at its joy, sacrificed all. When Orpheus broke the law, Eurydice faded away, and when he strove to hold her his arms closed upon empty air. Intemperance kills joy. Restraint is the guardian of purest pleasure.[1]

And so we find that the true way of liberty and life is the way of self-denial and not the way of self-indulgence; it is the way of the Cross, and the way of the Cross is the way of life. The true way of progress is the way of hardship, the way of purity, the way of deliberately setting the mind and will towards the things that are beautiful and good.

'Baptized into his death.' Such is the true Christian measure of life. Life becomes richer in proportion as it becomes more earnest, more set towards the good. God's service is perfect freedom; to serve Him, as the Latin Collect says, is to reign. And so our faith turns us back again to its beginning. The beginning of it all is the Cross; and the way of the Cross is the way for us Christians.

¶ There is an old legend which tells how a Crusader king won back the true cross from the heathen hosts, and brought it in triumph to Jerusalem. But when he reached the city he found the gate closed against him, and an angel standing there who said to him: 'Thou hast brought the cross back with great pomp and splendour. He that died upon it had shame for His companion, and carried it upon his back.'

Then, says the legend, the king dismounted, stripped off his rich robes, laid the cross on his shoulders, and went forward barefooted. And now the gate of the city was no longer barred against him, but opened of itself to give him entrance.

[1] T. H. Davies, *Spiritual Voices in Modern Literature*, 178.

Newness of Life

Rom. vi. 4.—'Like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.'

In the New Testament salvation has three aspects. One of these considers the soul in the moment of acceptance and surrender. Another regards its spiritual course and progress as it follows the upward calling of the Christian life. The third looks away off to the end, when the pilgrimage will be over, and all that time can do has been accomplished. 'Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.' Here the Apostle is fixing our attention on the course of the Christian life. His chief declaration is that Christ lived and died not only that men might be loosed from their sins and might be given a new ideal of righteousness, but that they might live a redeemed, consecrated, and increasingly victorious life.

He sets this truth in a simple and suggestive phrase. He calls it walking 'in newness of life.' This newness of life is not merely a method of living. It is a new principle of life. It is a new fount of moral passion and spiritual power in the soul. Paul does not mean merely that the redeemed man has new ideas, new convictions, new hopes. These he has in power. But newness of life is a new, inspiring, controlling, imperious energy within the soul. It is a change not merely in the habits of life, and in the words on the lips and the thoughts of the mind, but in the very core of a man's being.

Let us consider this experience, and mark how this new principle of life realizes and expresses itself.

1. *It is Life with a New Purpose.*—Most of us have some kind of a purpose but it does not always carry all through. It is confined to our work or our home. We may have different purposes ruling in different areas of life. And these purposes may clash. A man's aim in business may be quite different from that of his off-time. The spirit that rules him in the outside world may be very different from that which rules him in his home. The result is a divided life, full of conflict and waste and strain. Sometimes a business is advertised as being 'under new management.' The work is the same, probably also the staff. The same kinds of goods

are sold. But a new spirit is at work through and through. New methods are introduced, new ways of doing things. The whole staff feels the grip of the new spirit. It is something like this which Christ seeks to introduce into our lives. The Christian life is life under new management. It is life completely controlled by the Spirit of Christ. Everything becomes new when that happens. Strain disappears; burdens fall; worry ceases. There is a new attitude to difficulties and troubles. There is a new way of solving perplexities—His way, which He reveals to us in the quietness in which He speaks and guides. Life becomes a kind of divine adventure. New opportunities and tasks open up. It is life with a new purpose.

¶ Henry Martyn, that Cambridge student of brilliant scholarship, accepted Christ. He found his surrender a strait gate. He wrote, 'I have resigned in profession the riches, the honours and the comforts of this world, and I think it is a resignation of the heart.' He did not then know all that newness of life implied. Some time later the fuller blessing was given him, and he wrote, 'An almost supernatural fervour and deep devotion came upon me, whilst I declared that I had rightfully no other business each day but to do God's work, as a servant constantly regarding His pleasure.'

2. *It is Life with New Relationships.*—The real value of life for most of us lies in the quality of our personal relationships with others. But till Christ comes fully in they are apt to be very mixed. In some cases they are definitely wrong. Jealousy, or pride, or some bitterness from the past throws a shadow between us and certain people. In other cases our relationships may be defective. There are some we like very much; there is an affinity between us. There are some we actually dislike. And there is a vast multitude whom we just tolerate. We have no real interest in them. It is in this region that Christ can work the most active change in the quality of our life. He can transform the wrong relationship. Instead of the usual attitude of criticism, of hostility, of dislike, of indifference, He helps us to think about them in a new way, as people whom He loves and is seeking to help—perhaps through us.

¶ When Jesus put His hands upon the blind man's eyes once, he said that he saw men as trees walking. That is the state most of us are in. When He touched them again he saw every man clearly. The Christian eye sees beneath the externals of people, and its greatest triumph is the discovery of great interest in uninteresting people! I have seen missionaries—people of culture and delicate feeling—*enjoying* visits in certain houses on certain streets in China—a sight which will forever make it impossible for me to doubt the love of God or the reality of religion again. But it is just as wonderful wherever you come upon those who are pressingly aware of the individual value of others.[1]

The Christian attitude is not sentimental. It may make us challenge people. It will demand that we keep them up to their best. It is, as someone has said, 'identifying ourselves with God's interest in others.' He has an interest in the most unlovely and unlikely. And one of the things He does for those who come to Him fully is to kindle that interest. There is a jewel somewhere buried in the dullest heart. There is a soul in the most sodden, waiting the touch of life. That is the new outlook Christ brings.

3. *It is Life with New Faculties.*—The old faculties are consecrated, quickened, enlarged. The memory is cleansed, the imagination given a keener vision, the conscience enlightened, the judgment adjusted to a finer balance, and the will reinforced. All within a man is stirred up to new strength and more joyous activity. But beyond this new faculties of sight and of speech, of thought and reflection, of prayer and of service, of grace and of courtesy, of love and hope, awake within.

¶ Down in the mud, at the bottom of the pool, lies the dragon-fly. The dragon-fly, whose four wings flash as though set with jewels, whose slender body gleams with the richest hues of the rainbow, is found there in the garb of a common worm. It is hidden in the slime, waiting for the coming of the summer sun. When the warmer rays and stronger light have searched down into the darkness of the pool the still worm will stir with a new life, the creeping thing, which can only crawl among the ooze, will arise and climb, and on some reed will reach the light and air, and discover itself to the warm summer sunshine. Then its eyes will open to the light, its wings will unfold, and in its quickened energy it will fly and flash among the sunbeams.

[1] S. M. Shoemaker, *Realizing Religion*, 88.

4. *It is Life with New Felicities.*—No better word can be found to describe the happy content, the continual zest, the gladness and blessedness which visit the man who has entered into newness of life. They show themselves in the temper, in the tone of the voice, in the unfailing courtesy of bearing. They radiate from within and leave their light on the face. For the man who walks in newness of life the days never become monotonous, the romance of the years never fades, the interests of life are never made up, and old age is never cynical or scornful. There are pleasures which earth can give, but before the end even the desire for them will fail. There is a peace and a joy which man can give, but man can take them away. But the felicities that visit the soul of the man have a deeper gladness as life goes on. 'The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree; they shall still bring forth fruit in old age' is the Psalmist's song. 'The outward man perisheth, but the inward man is renewed day by day' is the soberer message of the Apostle. 'He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again, but he that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.' That is the Master's perfect word.

¶ A soldier blinded by shrapnel, but whose sight was restored by a daring operation, described his first emotion at seeing light after eight years of darkness. 'The bandage fell from my eyes and I walked into a new world of hope, faith, and beauty. This world is in my heart and I shall walk in it until I die.' [1]

The Finality of the Cross

Rom. vi. 9.—'Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more.'

1. The Crucifixion can never happen again. Is it possible to enter, with some faint degree of imagination, into what this meant for our Lord Himself? Sometimes a man is haunted, it may be for days and years, by some ghost which refuses to be laid. Some dreadful possibility lurks in the skirts of circumstance, and he is never sure at what moment it may leap out upon him. But by and by the man finds that his deliverance has arrived. The man who was whetting his dagger against him passes to a world where his enmity is impotent for ever. Or the set of circumstances which conspired against him is dissolved by the touch of time. Or the painful experience comes upon the man in the worst fulfilment of his fears, but this is a revolving world, and the scheme of things is a moving scheme, and the hour of extremity passes as other things pass, to return no more. The words *No more* in such circumstances are very sweet. They turn into 'a slow contented song.' In such an hour it is possible to appreciate the music of that trumpet-voiced *No more* in the story of the Exodus. 'And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again *no more* for ever.' Men of later days in other senses have had Pharaoh hot upon their heels. But the hour comes when peril is definitely left behind, and their hearts cry 'no more' with infinite relief and with passionate thanksgiving.

But we are considering the case of our Lord Himself. The Cross did not come upon Him entirely as a surprise. The Holman Hunt picture which shows the shadow of a cross falling dark upon the Nazareth workshop is more than an artist's fancy: it is a transcript of history. As far back as our records take us into the earlier life of Jesus we find the shadow and suggestion of the Cross. We link together the phrase of His boyhood, 'I must be about my Father's business,' and its glimpse of a dominating necessity, with that later glimpse of the ruling imperative, 'The Son of Man must go into Jerusalem, and suffer, and be killed.' The same shadow seemed to steal even into the brighter moments of the earlier ministry, when He and His disciples together were glad with the gladness of the springtime. 'Can the children of the bride-chamber fast,' He asked some of His sour-hearted critics, 'while the bridegroom is with them?' But even into this circle of sunshine the shadow stole, dark and cold and threatening. 'The days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away.' There is no need to recount how prominent the same thought became as the years went on, not only in His own mind, but in His repeated lessons to His disciples: the experiences of His life and ministry became more and more clearly milestones on the way to the Cross.

We love to think of the Resurrection from the point of view of the disciples, the surprise of it, the overwhelming gladness it brought, the new world it created, just to be on this side of the Cross and the Tomb. But we may put a little

[1] A. Maclean, *High Country*, 55.

reverent imagination into the conception of what this meant to our Lord Himself—to have the Cross behind and not before. The poverty and discipline of this mortal life were over. The buffeting at the hands of men and all the bitterness of death were left behind. His flawless offering was accepted of the Father, and the narrow, local task was merging into the world-wide ministry to which all power in heaven and on earth was promised. It is not written in the immortal story, yet faith and love bid imagination do its poor best to picture it—the new light that was in His eyes, and the new royalty in His mien, and the new gladness in His voice, as He came again into the circle of His friends to say, 'Peace be unto you.' Peace was in His own heart, peace unutterable yet overflowing, such peace as those know who have crossed their Red Sea and won their land of promise. For the cup was drained: the burden was borne, and the Cross could never be repeated. 'Christ being raised from the dead *dieth no more*.'

2. Yet in this passage the glorious finality of the Cross is viewed more from the standpoint of the Christian than from that of the Christ. The passage reads as though, even after the Christ Himself had travelled past Calvary and all its woe, the Cross were left standing in its socket beside the highway to mark the definite ending of one great stage of experience. Itself final, it is an emblem of finality. The Christian, like his Lord, leaves behind an experience which is negative, humiliating, and in the strict sense mortifying, that he may pass on to one which is positive, enlarging, and vitalizing. Dr Moffatt thus renders the fourth verse: 'Our baptism into death made us share His burial, so that, as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live and move in the new sphere of life.' In that phrase about sharing His burial we can see a whole pageant of self-oblation: the dying and entombment of the Lord are to the Apostle's eye not a solitary fact; he sees an endless company of believing men following in the same hard way and learning the same stern lesson. Yet the pageant of that sombre road moves on into the sunshine and becomes a pageant of self-realization. As the Apostle watches his Lord coming forth to a new day of power and joy, he sees that for believing men also the negative stage, the disciplinary stage, the crucifixion stage is not the end; they also come on to the 'new sphere of life,' where they almost forget the crucifixion of the flesh in the liberty of the spirit, and cease to reckon what they have parted with because they rejoice so greatly in what God bestows.

It may be granted that St Paul was an idealist. A stronger word might be better—a word less intellectual and more warmly human. It might be wiser to call him a great believer—a great believer for others as well as for himself. But the word idealist will serve, for this is one of the most magnificently idealistic passages in literature. Realism, seeing only what is on the surface, would say that most Christians, in Paul's day or in any day, are grievously unlike their Lord. Idealism, with sharp sight to look inwards, and with far sight to look onwards, judges them by what they shall be, by what they have it in them to become. St Paul in his exuberant idealism sees believing men so identified with their Lord that they are at once sealed with the sign of His Cross, and transformed into the likeness of His Resurrection. Their baptism is a parable of that double experience, and their life is that parable drawn out into action.

3. If modern men are to make anything of this Pauline idealism they must put their wills into it. It is not enough to leave it upon the cold printed page and study it with admiration and surprise. Did not the Lord cry an exultant *No more* to the dominion of Death when He came forth into life on the Resurrection morning? So the believing man, by all the desires, intents, and purposes of his consecrated heart, will cry *No more* to the dominion of evil in the hour of his self-surrender—a joyful No more, a defiant No more, a firm and resolute No more: 'I am not thine, but free, and for ever hate thee.' That is the meaning of St Paul's charge to his readers: 'Reckon ye yourselves to be dead unto sin.' Even if it be not in the full sense actually so; even if the volcano still slumbers beneath the ashes of its former fires; even if the old life still sometimes rises from its grave and fumbles with the latch of its sepulchre—'reckon yourselves to be dead unto sin.' Act as if it were so. Act as if the ideal were the real. Live up to your better selves—not looking back or turning back. That is the appeal. And all things are possible to the hearts that loyally respond to it, for the power that raised Christ

from the dead is at their service, to turn their visions into realities and their purposes into fulfilments.

¶ Christ is before you to take freely; accept Him, trust Him, believe what He says, *assume* that you are His, and behave as if you were. Do your part, and will God fail on His? This will not bear to be stated. . . . Go about your daily duties, your reading, your praying, *assuming* that you are God's child, acting in all things as if you were. He will make it all right: He *is* making it all right.[1]

For men who put their wills into this high task must put their faith into it too. Paul will have it that the idealism of this passage, and indeed of all his letters, is not his own idealism but God's: 'the glory of the Father,' shining through Cross and Resurrection, glows through all these counsels and hopes. Christian men may sing:

Lo! between our sins and their reward
We set the passion of Thy Son our Lord.

Yet they can set between their past and their present that arresting, decisive, transforming sign, only because God Himself has set it there, and made it impossible for them to get behind it or to live as though it had never been. And when they answer with faith and resolution, He has His great *No more* of promise with which to answer the *No more* of their detachment from the world and attachment to Himself. Are they darkened by their ignorance and misunderstandings? 'The sun shall be *no more* thy light by day, but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.' Does the earth-life on to its close seem haunted by limitations, failures, and regrets? 'He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be *no more*; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the former things are passed away.' Thus, with Redeeming Mercy behind them, around them, before them, the children of promise move onwards, from the Cross to the Crown.

I count myself, O Saviour, dead with Thee!
By faith I also in Thy death have died:
Shall sin still have dominion over me—
The sin which on Thy Cross was crucified?

I count Thee, O my Lord, alive in me!
I know as surely as in Thee I died,
So surely Thou Thyself hast risen in me!
And ever more Thou wilt in me abide.

And all the wondrous graces which are Thine—
The glorious gifts which God in Thee has stored—
Come in Thy coming and with Thee are mine,
Since I am One with Thee, my risen Lord!

[1] Alexander Whyte.

What shall We do with our Lives?

Rom. vi. 9.—'Death no more hath dominion over him' (R.V.).

1. SCIENCE has now answered many questions which were unanswered not many years ago. What is the result of that? The result is that out of these answers there has arisen a group of new questions, deeper, more penetrating, and more enthralling than any which were asked before. When we turn to the writings of Sir James Jeans or Sir Arthur Eddington or listen to their talks, we realize how tremendous these new questions are—these questions that have grown out of answers. Now there is one great question in which all the others come to a focus, and, so to speak, sum themselves up: 'What shall we do with our lives?' The quest for knowledge as it goes on through the ages takes the forms of science. If we look into it closely we will find that the impulse that sustains it all—the hope that endures through it all—is the hope of getting light on this great summary question.

It is because we have a life to do something with, because we feel ourselves responsible for making the best use of it, that we are so eager to find out all we can about these other things, always in the hope that the light we get upon them will help us to solve the question how to use our lives wisely and well. Not long ago H. G. Wells wrote a book which bears this very title—*What shall We do with our Lives?* And it is a summary of all the books that Mr Wells has written. It is just the same with Bernard Shaw. In his plays or his speeches he is all the time hammering away at this question—What shall we do with our lives?

2. How does the Christian religion answer that great question? The answer is a perfectly clear one and absolutely true, although, like all

true answers, it breaks out into new questions the moment we get it, that being God's way of educating the human mind. To the question, What shall I do with my life? the Christian religion answers, You shall give it away. You shall make a generous gift of it, even to the extent of being willing to lay it down altogether. Like a good soldier of Jesus Christ you shall find something to live for that is worth dying for as well. Away then with the motto 'Safety first.' Away with all that miserable botheration about the thing you are pleased to call your happiness. Die to live, if you would have life at all. Not till then shall death have no dominion over you.

¶ Thomas Bridges, an unwanted babe, was found by a riverside. They picked him up at a bridge; that is why they called him Bridges. They discovered him on St Thomas' Day; that is why they called him Thomas. He did not have a chance. But for all that Thomas Bridges found the secret of a healthy and a happy life—something to stand for. He picked out about the hardest thing that could be found to do—working with the aborigines of Tierra del Fuego, at the desolate southern end of the Western Hemisphere. Even Charles Darwin paid tribute to his work. For Darwin turned up in that forlorn locality on his famous scientific voyage on the steamship *Beagle*, and afterwards sent a financial contribution, saying in effect that at first he had seen little use in missions among the aborigines, but now, having learned of the transformation wrought at Tierra del Fuego, he was glad to have a hand in it.

Could there ever have been a generation with more worth while things to stand for than to-day? To be sure one need not head in toward Tierra del Fuego or enterprise any public or picturesque adventure like it. I have a friend who is facing death, not an easy death either—two operations already past and now recurrent trouble inoperable. All the doctors agree six months will finish the matter. Six months more and she must say good-bye to a husband who adores her and lovely children who need her. But she is one of the most radiant and triumphant spirits I have met in many a year. She is standing for something—the power of a deep religious faith to create a victorious life in a difficult situation. As the New Testament says about Jesus, death hath no dominion over her [1]

[1] H. E. Fosdick, *The Secret of Victorious Living*, 274.

3. Christianity is above all else a death-conquering religion, the religion of One who, as St Paul said, proved Himself to be a Son of God with power by His conquest of death, by His resurrection from the dead—a conquest and a resurrection which He calls upon us all to share with Him.

It is impossible to be very cheerful about life, or indeed to be very much in earnest about life until somehow we have managed to make our peace with death. It is true that life ought to be our main concern; our main study should be the study of life. But death is so important a factor in life, both as a prospect which we all have to face, and as a blow—sometimes a shattering blow—when our friends or our loved ones are taken from us. Death is so constant and powerful a factor in life that no study of life, no philosophy of life, can be worth very much when it leaves death out of the picture. How often a man's philosophy of life, indeed his very religion, collapses like a house of cards because death has struck at it! Another life that was intertwined with his—one taken and the other left. We know that a great philosopher once said in words that are often quoted, and nearly always misunderstood, that a wise man thinks of nothing so little as he does of death. The reply is that the foolish man thinks even less than the wise man does, and the dumb animals do not think of it at all. As to St Paul, there was nothing of which he had thought so deeply, so boldly, and so triumphantly as death. His gospel of liberty, his gospel of joy, his gospel of victory, was the outcome of his thinking about death. It was a death-conquering religion that he announced to the world, and life-conquering because it had already conquered death.

4. How had it all come about? It was all bound up with St Paul's preaching of Christ, the Christ who had been crucified; the Christ who had embraced the Cross as His destiny; the Christ who had come into the world, not alone for the purpose of living in it, but for the purpose of dying for it—the Christ whose will to die was interwoven with His will to live.

Here was something which seemed to St Paul to be a master-key to the meaning of life. Here was something that answered the question, What shall we do with our lives? But how was it so? Was it just the contemplation of that

great tragedy that moved St Paul to his death-conquering attitude? Was it that aspect of the matter which after ages have dwelt upon, somewhat morbidly, in the broken and bleeding figure of the Crucifix. No; the dying of the Christ was none of these things. It was not a calamity that had befallen Him. It was not a cruel fate put upon Him by wicked men. It was a positive and glorious achievement which revealed Him in His majesty and power. His dying was His masterstroke. No man had taken His life from Him. He had laid it down of Himself, and He had come into the world to do so. What a paradox that is! What a contradiction to all our shallow way of looking at death and at life too. The natural man keeps death at arm's length. He shuns it. But the spiritual man confronts death. He embraces it. He wills to die, and dies daily. He wills to do so, and by so doing he enters the eternal life, where death has no more dominion over him. That was unquestionably the victorious religion of the Apostle Paul. That was what caused him to exclaim, 'Rejoice in the Lord always.'

¶ There is a Swiss story of the man in ancient days who, when there was no way through the enemy line, gathered all the spears of the enemy he could reach and let them pierce his own breast and, falling down, held them there, to allow his comrades to walk over his prostrate body to victory through the way thus opened. When one consents to the way of the Cross he gathers up into his heart all the spear-points of trouble and sorrow that life can point at him, and, holding them there, everything within him can now march on to victory over the prostrate form of his consented death.[1]

The Decisive Note

Rom. vi. 10.—'Once.'

'ONCE!' We use this word in English sometimes in a retrospect when time past is in sharp contrast to time present. 'Once' is balanced by 'now.' 'I was a happy man once.' But there is also the meaning which the word has here, 'once for all,' of a thing once done and never repeated. The argument of this whole chapter is an argument for a decisive repudiation of a former life and acceptance of the new life in Christ Jesus. This note of decisiveness, of course, is characteristic of the whole of the New Testament. It appears in the various metaphors which St Paul employed in order to set forth the difference Jesus makes when He enters into a man's life. He takes possession. There is a new creation. He says again it is like being a slave, and now being brought into the family and made a child of God. He used every kind of metaphor that was available to set forth the enormous, incredible change.

All these things tell us that according to the New Testament there is something utterly decisive about Christian experience. In one generation after another the Christian Church has been qualifying it, accommodating it, perhaps, to the impoverished experience of the time. Certainly that has been done in the last generation or two. We have had something to say for ourselves. We had, for instance, to consider that we were living in a Christian country. When we began to think of people brought up in Christian homes, familiar with Christian speech, familiar from their mother's knee with Christian hymns, in sympathy with what the Church is doing and taking some share in its work, it seemed impossible for us to apply this kind of decisive language that St Paul uses, as though Christian experience meant always turning from darkness to light, from slavery to sonship. So we had to make some accommodating theory, and make allowance for people who, as we said, came gradually and almost imperceptibly into the Kingdom of God. But is anybody satisfied now with its results? It would seem that, wherever you have taken away this decisive element in Christian experience, the Christian religion has lost its power, and instead of spreading by its own inherent vitality it has had to be painfully pushed on by all kinds of assiduous efforts. Nowadays we are a little disquieted to find that the Christian gospel has lost something of its contagious quality. One would have thought that people who had grown up amidst Christian influences, people who never needed to pull up another religion by the very roots, would have been able to show us better than those who came in otherwise what was the length and breadth and height and depth of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Surely the voices most gloriously sounding His praise should have been the voices of those who did not come in damaged by the pagan sins that darken other

[1] E. Stanley Jones, *The Christ of the Mount*, 70.

pages of human history. But it has not really worked out in that way.

There is enough in the situation to-day to make us wonder whether we have not denied something that is in Jesus Christ. Have we not taught others to expect less of Him than He really came to do? Have we reduced Christ below the level of miracle and brought Him nearer to what can be done by other agencies?

There are three marks of a decisive experience. We shall find them in three familiar phrases. The first is, 'Once for all'; the second is, 'All or nothing'; the third is 'Here and now.' In these three phrases we have the heart of the evangelical gospel.

1. '*Once for all.*'—We are all of us afraid to say that. We make little choices from day to day, but there is the kind of choice we do not make very often, because it affects all the rest of our lives. Some of us can go back to the days of 1914, when one and another we really loved went out of the door, and came back looking a little grey. We knew at once what it was. They had put down their names, and put them down once for all. Some of us remember seeing them off by train, when they knew better what it meant, and they gave us a look which said, It is possible I may never come back again. We knew then what 'once for all' meant. We knew it by the look on men's faces, and the tones of their voices. They were dealing with something deeper than they had known before, something final. And we are all afraid of that. We talk about burning our boats, and about crossing the Rubicon. What is it that makes such phrases remain in the mind? They are the signature of one of those decisions in which there is no going back. When we come to religious experience there are times when we would give anything to be able to say, 'Once for all.' We hate our inconsistency. We hate the vows made and not kept, the pledge of loyalty not fulfilled. We are put to shame, many of us, and wish we could strike our hand on the desk and say, Now then, that is done! When God deals with us there is no question of revocation. It is for time and eternity.

¶ Then the Interpreter took him and led him up toward the door of the palace; and, behold, at the door stood a great company of men, as desirous to go in, but durst not. There also sat a man at a little distance from the door, at a table-side, with a book and his ink-horn before him, to take the name of him that should enter therein; he saw also that in the doorway stood many men in armour to keep it, being resolved to do to the men that would enter what hurt and mischief they could. Now was Christian somewhat in amaze. At last, when every man started back for fear of the armed men, Christian saw a man of a very stout countenance come up to the man that sat there to write, saying, Set down my name, sir.[1]

2. '*All or nothing.*'—That, again, is the mark of the decisive experience. It does not belong, as some people think, to the maturer Christian experience. This 'all or nothing' is not something we may defer to the later stages of our Christian life, when we are more ready for it. It is true, of course, that whatever our surrender to God may be, there will be many things in our nature which we do not fully understand, and which God will show us in due time. There will be a deeper edification. But there is no reservation. Either we give all or we give nothing. That is the very essence of the Christian gospel. That is why the Christian religion is in many respects the most disconcerting in the world. It means face to face dealing between ourselves and the Lord who bought us. That is why it is so costly, so disconcerting, so exacting. When we enter into personal relations with Christ it is all or nothing. Reservation or compromise would be an insult. No one really face to face with Jesus Christ offers half.

¶ There was a day in Napoleon's life when disaffection and mutiny had broken out among the men of the Old Guard, and the risk was great. But Napoleon knew how to meet it. He sat alone in a little room in his palace, a room which had two large apartments opening off it to the right and left; and in the hall to the left the members of the Guard were assembled. Each man was summoned alone to Napoleon, and as he entered the door was shut. Not a word was spoken; but Napoleon clasped the man's hand and looked him full in the face. Then each passed out again by the door on the right, until the whole of the Guard, one by one, had passed through. And when all had passed

[1] Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress.*

the disaffection and the mutiny were over. The silent look and the handclasp had done their work: every man of them was Napoleon's now.[1]

3. '*Here and now.*'—We are apt specially to recoil from the words 'here and now.' We are so much in love with slow changes. But if not here and now, then where, and when? Will it be when we have tidied up the house which He is to enter? It is no use waiting a week, a month, ten years; the house will not grow tidier because of His being put off. Will it be when we have more decisively repudiated our sin and made ourselves more fit for the entrance of that amazing visitor? 'All the fitness He requireth is to feel our need of Him.' Where and when, if not here and now? If we search for an answer to that question we shall find at the bottom we are only giving excuses like the men who were invited to the marriage feast.

¶ 'I was speaking once to a leader in the industrial world,' says Dr Macmillan, 'pointing out the prior claim that Christ had on him, on his wonderful gifts, and his energy, and his time, and what it would mean for Christ's Kingdom if he could give instant and complete obedience to His claim. He was much intrigued; the thing appealed to him; he was much moved. He rose and paced restlessly up and down the room and, after a silence, said: "No, no, it is not so simple as all that. There are lots of things I've got to do before that." *But they were his own things.*'

There is a passage in the last book of the Bible where a message is addressed to a Church in terms of extraordinary severity. They are a complacent lukewarm crowd. Our Lord is there described in His dignity and majesty as saying He will spew them out of His mouth because they are neither cold nor hot. It means that there was something disgusting about a Church that had been redeemed by the blood of Christ, that had once known Him, and now sat there content with its feeble attainment, not knowing how miserably poor and blind it was. Then comes another word: 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock.' At the door of a Church like that! 'If any man will hear my voice and open the door, I will come in!' We are not told: 'If you will give me half, you can keep the rest till later on.' We are not told to keep so many precepts. The God who draws near to us in Christ says, 'I stand at the door and knock.' There is only one thing to do. We must either say 'Yes' or 'No.' It means either opening the door or closing it.

O love that passeth knowledge,
So patiently to wait!
O sin that hath no equal,
So fast to bar the gate!

O Jesus, Thou art pleading
In accents meek and low,
'I died for you, My children,
And will ye treat Me so?'
O Lord, with shame and sorrow
We open now the door;
Dear Saviour, enter, enter
And leave us nevermore.[1]

[1] J. S. Stewart.

[1] W. Walsham How.

ALIVE UNTO GOD

Rom. vi. 11 (R.V.)—'Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus.

In this chapter St Paul makes a notable advance in the massive argument of his Epistle. Up to this point he has been setting forth the great doctrine of justification by faith alone, how by the grace of God sinners are justified 'through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.' He has dwelt with passionate insistence on the fact that this grace of God is absolutely free, not to be earned by any merit or works of righteousness, but to be received as a free gift, available for the sinfullest.

Now to this teaching an obvious objection may be made, that it is subversive of morality. If sinners are assured of forgiveness they will grow careless and at ease in their sin. If righteousness before God is received as a free

gift what need is there for moral endeavour? May the sinner not even go the length of saying that the more he sins the more illustrious will the grace of God appear in his forgiveness? This objection was made in St Paul's day by many who thought that his gospel was undermining the very foundations of the moral law, and it continues to this day to be a difficulty in the minds of all who do not understand the power of God's grace. It must be admitted that the conduct of evangelical Christians has all too often given ground for this objection. There is a real danger, to which many have succumbed, of making God's grace an excuse for moral laxity. There are those in every Christian community who apparently feel that, having once put their trust in the mercy of God and having received the assurance of His forgiveness, they can henceforth take things easy. Even Martin Luther did not wholly escape this danger, for his wife had occasion to ask him, 'Why is it, Dr Luther, that we are now more careless about our prayers and religious exercises than we were before?' It is said, manifestly with a large measure of truth, that men in our time are not troubling about their sins, and doubtless one reason of this unhappy state of moral insensibility is that the love of God has been preached so exclusively as to have driven out of many minds the fear of God. Can it be truthfully said that the average Christian—that any of us—is working out his own salvation with fear and trembling, or is seriously taking account, as St Paul did, of the possibility that in the end he may be a castaway? If the grace of God thus induces moral slackness in any of us, we may be sure there is something far wrong with our conception of grace and with our whole moral condition.

How does the Apostle meet this objection? He bluntly declares it to be a calumny. The grace of God in Christ, received into the heart by faith, could never possibly produce such a result. 'How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?' An impassable gulf has come between us and the old life, making any return to it unthinkable. Elsewhere St Paul expresses the same truth under another form. We have been redeemed, he says, and from being slaves have become sons of God. Naturally, then, we shall live in accordance with the spirit of sonship which we have received. If any man live in any other spirit he is obviously not a son of God. In the passage before us St Paul puts the point even more absolutely. The Christian has not simply been delivered from slavery to bondage; he has passed from death to life. He has been born again; he has become a new creature in Christ Jesus. For him, therefore, old things have passed away—the old life, the old desires, the old ways; and all things have become new. This fact is absolutely vital and central in the Apostle's thinking. St Paul is without doubt the supreme preacher of justification, but it is a complete travesty of his gospel to represent it as exclusively forensic. Salvation meant for him not only justification, but living union with Christ. It was needful to show how guilty sinners are set right in the eyes of a Holy God, for it is certain that there can be no salvation by favouritism nor hope of a mercy which conflicts with the Divine righteousness. All this St Paul could set forth with matchless logic, but never for one moment did he forget that it is '*in Christ*' that the sinner is justified. Accordingly the thought of a living union with Christ is the necessary complement of his doctrine of justification. The Christian is one who is dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus. This completely meets the objection that the gospel is in any degree subversive of morality. It shows, on the contrary, that there must inevitably be consequences which are morally revolutionary. Let us consider, then, what this new life is, and what are its issues in Christian character and conduct.

I

A New Environment

It is a life lived in a new environment. Now all natural science teaches that its environment has a dominant and quite decisive influence on every living creature. The whole manner of its existence is determined by the question whether it is to live in the sea or on the land or in the air. If an animal is brought into a new environment it must adapt itself to that environment or die. There is much evidence to show that God's way in Nature is to introduce creatures into new environments, and by so doing to change completely their character and mode of life. Thus, as seems most probable,

life appeared first in the water, but by and by, impelled by some divinely implanted instinct, some creatures essayed to live upon the land, and in so doing they became literally new creatures. Unless they had done so they could never have maintained themselves, for life itself may be defined as correspondence with environment. Speaking of 'Nature's method of making extraordinarily new things out of very old things,' Sir J. Arthur Thomson says, 'There is no doubt that to make an apparently very new thing out of a really very old thing is part of Nature's magic.' In this respect the order of Grace follows that of Nature, so that the new creature in Christ Jesus is an extraordinarily new being brought out of the old through its introduction into a new environment.

'Christ,' it has been well said, 'is the redeemed man's new environment.' Just as a bird lives in the air and needs the air to live in, just as a fish lives in the water and can live nowhere else, so, in St Paul's view, a Christian man needs the presence of his Master; and if that is withdrawn he must speedily die. This is the idea which underlies the phrase, 'in Christ,' so frequently found in St Paul's Epistles. Deissmann, who made a special study of the phrase, finds that it occurs in various forms in St Paul's Epistles no less than a hundred and sixty-four times, while it is never found in the Synoptic Gospels. From this we may gather how prominent a place it held in the Apostle's thought. Plainly he thinks of the Christian as one who lives habitually in a spiritual atmosphere which is to him the very breath of life. Just as the natural man lives in the air as his essential environment and inwardly breathes the air, so the spiritual man lives in Christ and receives into his heart the Spirit of Christ. Thus at one and the same time he is in Christ and Christ is in him.

This great conception, on which St Paul laid such stress and from which he drew such inspiration, has its root in the teaching of our Lord Himself. He undoubtedly taught under various symbols that His living presence is absolutely essential to the Christian life. 'I am the vine,' He said to His disciples, 'ye are the branches. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered.' A like significance attaches to His words about the bread of life, words which are confirmed and impressed upon the Christian mind and heart by the sacrament of the Holy Supper. In union with Christ there is true life, apart from Him no possibility of such life. In Christ as their spiritual environment His people live and move and have their being.

II

A New Type of Life

The new environment requires a new type of life. That must needs be, for, as we have seen, life is only possible in harmony with its environment. What, then, is the manner of this new life? Here not only the human example of our Lord Jesus, but His whole experience in life and death and resurrection becomes our guide. He died to sin. He was in the world, but His spirit was untouched by its corruptions. The world was hostile to Him and cast Him out; crucified Him, buried Him, and so, as much as in it lay, made an end of Him. Nothing could more powerfully express the utter antagonism between Christ and sin. But He rose from the dead and entered into a new and heavenly life, a life over which the world had no dominion and sin no claim. St Paul's argument here is that Christ's people must needs share in His experiences, must in all things be conformed to His likeness, must live and die with Him, and rise into newness of life in Him. Their vital union with Him makes all this a necessity. From this we may learn the manner of the Christian life. It has two aspects: towards sin and towards God.

(1) We are to be 'dead unto sin.' Now, consider how absolute a word 'dead' is. It admits of no degrees or qualifications. The line between the living and the dead cannot be obliterated. It marks the final closing of a door, the bourne from which no traveller returns. The dead are unmoved by all that passes in the world from which they have been taken away. Its pains and pleasures, its temptations, its ambitions make no impression upon them. They have completely lost the power of response. That world which once was so absorbing and so full of interest is now nothing to them. In like manner, says St Paul, the Christian is to be dead to the world of sin. We are accustomed ourselves to use this figure of speech. We say, for example, that a man is dead to a

sense of shame, or dead to ambition, when these things make no appeal to him. In the same way, when a man is 'in Christ,' sin makes no appeal to him and he makes no response to its allurements.

There are, it should be noted, two stages of moral attainment. At the first stage sin still has a power of attraction. To commit certain sins is still, as the psychologists would phrase it, a living option. It is a temptation which has to be consciously resisted and overcome. Victory over it may be very hard and costly. All honour to those who in this battle with moral evil resist manfully and win. But there is a higher stage of moral attainment to be sought after and enjoyed, the stage, namely, when temptation ceases to tempt, when it has lost its power of attraction, when it stirs no response in the heart. Probably we have all reached this stage in respect of certain sins. There are thoroughly honest people who could never be tempted to steal. The opportunity might present itself, but the thought of stealing would not even occur to them. There are people to whom the sin of sexual impurity is simply unthinkable, people also who could no more imagine themselves getting drunk than they could imagine themselves committing murder. These are cases where the heart is dead to certain sins, has ceased to respond to certain temptations. In like manner, St Paul teaches, the Christian is to be dead to all sin, putting it so completely away from him that temptation in every shape and form will no longer have any power of appeal or wake any response in the heart.

(2) 'Alive unto God'—this is the positive aspect of the Christian life. Jesus died to sin, but He rose again into a new and higher life in God. Even so His people die to the world, crucifying its lusts and passions, and are quickened into newness of life in Him. Beyond the reproduction in the believer's spiritual life of his Lord's death and burial lies the glorious fact of union with Christ in His resurrection. 'Like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.' The two aspects of the experience must never be separated. There is no salvation in a mere negative attitude to sin. To cast out the devils and leave the house 'empty, swept, and garnished,' is simply to invite their return. Only the Spirit of God in the heart can defend it from the spirits of evil. So the Christian man is one who is 'alive unto God,' hearkening to His word, seeing the traces of His hand, on the outlook for every indication of His will, responsive to His Spirit and alert to obey. He lives in harmony with a new Divine environment. He is alive to all that is good, as keen and energetic now in working for righteousness as ever he was in working for self and sin.

The words 'dead' and 'alive' have a ring of finality about them. They stand over against each other with a great gulf between. They imply a decisive taking of sides; they permit of no half-way house between. The Group Movement of our day sums up the Christian life under the heading of 'Four Absolutes.' Keswick teachers have been accustomed to call on men to pass 'clean over Jordan.' These phrases are simply modern interpretations of St Paul's teaching here, and of the whole doctrine of the New Testament in regard to the Christian life. It is something clean-cut and decisive. It is the very opposite of the Laodicean spirit which was 'neither cold nor hot.' There can be no serving of two masters, no holding on to both worlds. To the world of evil it must be dead, to the world of good it must be alive for ever more.

III

A Great Moral Problem

All this raises a great moral problem. The mighty saving change of which the Apostle here speaks comes not by any process of natural evolution, but by the grace of God working along the line of conscious moral effort. The ideal of the Christian life is one thing, the realization of it in the experience of the individual Christian is quite another. While St Paul sets forth what the essential character of the new life in Christ is, he would be the first to acknowledge how far he himself was from fully attaining it. He says explicitly, 'I have not yet attained, I am not yet perfect.' and in the record we have of his Christian life we find abundant evidence of penitence for shortcoming, of strenuous endeavour, of rigorous self-discipline. Doubtless there is no one of us but would confess that we do not find sin so dead within us nor our hearts so alive to God as we could wish. What are we to do about it?

'Reckon ye also yourselves,' says the Apostle, 'to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus.' In other words, let this be ever your fundamental assumption, the major premise of all your thinking. Never allow yourself to imagine that you can act in anything but a Christian way. There is great power in holding up an ideal of this sort before us. A man of high honour goes on the complete assumption that dishonourable conduct is impossible for him. 'Death before dishonour,' he would say. Different social circles have each their standard of right conduct according to which certain things 'are not done.' Once a man gets thoroughly imbued with the idea that a thing 'is not done' it quite puts the temptation to do it out of his mind.

The Christian has to get thoroughly imbued with the idea that sin in every shape and form 'is not done,' and that goodness, always and everywhere, '*is* done.' This is what St John means when he says, 'Whosoever is born of God sinneth not.' The whole world of evil is for the Christian out of bounds, and it is a settled thing for him that he must never trespass on forbidden ground. To go in the way of sin would take him clean out of his proper element, out of that spiritual environment which is the breath of life to him.

This is the supreme safeguard of the new life. We are never really 'out of gunshot of the devil,' as John Bunyan phrases it, until we are dead to sin. So long as it has a root in the heart it may some day spring up to trouble us. So long as it has any power of appeal it may come upon us in some moment of weakness and overpower us. Henry Drummond tells the story of an Englishman in India whose bungalow, standing on rising ground, became in time of a great flood a harbour of refuge to the creatures in the neighbouring forest. With the rest came a tiger which, on reaching land, lay down cowering, paralyzed with fear. The Englishman put his gun to its ear and shot it dead. 'Cruel, unsportsmanlike,' some might say, but the only wise thing to do. To harbour a living tiger about the house is too terrible a risk. In the Civil War in England, when the Parliamentary party were considering what should be done with the Earl of Strafford, who was regarded as the arch enemy of the country's liberty, the Earl of Essex made the grim remark, 'Stone dead hath no fellow.' There could be no security till so dangerous an enemy was finally put away.

Sin to us is that mortal enemy, far more subtle and deadly than any of us can imagine. Our only safety is to have done with it, make an end of it, turn away from it finally and for ever. 'Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus.' Thus life becomes a new thing, lived in a new atmosphere, with something of the wonderful concentration and unity of purpose which marked the career of the Apostle, who could say with sincerity, 'One thing I do,' 'to me to live is Christ.'

J. H. Morrison

Death or Life?

Rom. vi. 23.—'For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

St Paul condenses his high argument on the interaction of the wrath and the grace of God into this brief sentence. It holds three affirmations. The *first* is that the enmity and mutiny of sin receive the penalty of death as justly and deservedly as a labourer receives his wage for the work he has done. The *second* is that the pulsing spiritual energy of eternal life is the gift of God in and through Jesus Christ. The *third* is that every man must face these two alternatives.

1. *The Wages of Sin is Death.*—What is death? Like life it remains, in the last analysis, a mystery, but the proofs and evidences of it are clear and definite. The signs of physical death have a certain similarity to those of spiritual death, although the one is a swifter, subtler, and more awful experience than the other. Physical death is recognized by the failure of the organism to fulfil its functions. The brain becomes torpid. The heart stops. The second evidence is the insensibility which can make no response to any stimulus from the outer world. Then there is the final and unmistakable proof—corruption. So in spiritual death this failure of the functions of the soul, this absence of response to the appeal of a spiritual world, and at last a moral corruption make up its sure signs. These are the wages of death.

Let us mark the history of this penalty.

(1) Consider, to begin with, the instancy of

death. Death passes upon the soul in the very act of sin. God does pay wages in the hour in which they are earned. We all know the meaning of the phrase, 'the moment after.' We all know how instantly the sentence of death passes in the moment when the passion is sated. It is, as our poet says,

> A bliss in proof . . . and proved, a very woe.

In the moment of sin death passes upon the innocence and heart's ease of the soul. In the Old Testament story, with its inspired insight, we are told that in the moment when the forbidden fruit was eaten, 'the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.' So, always, death passes upon the virgin purity, and stifles the holy desires of the soul. Like a touch of frost on the flowers of the garden, the tender and living simplicities of the soul are dead.

¶ There is a passage in Du Maurier's *Trilby*, in which Little Billee for the first time becomes intoxicated: 'And when, after some forty-eight hours or so, he had quite slept off the fumes of that memorable Christmas debauch, he found that a sad thing had happened to him, and a strange! It was as though a tarnishing breath had swept over the reminiscent mirror of his mind and left a little film behind it, so that no past thing he wished to see therein was reflected with quite the same pristine clearness. As though the keen, quick, razor-like edge of his power to reach and re-evoke the bygone charm and glamour and essence of things had been blunted and coarsened.'

(2) Mark, again, the sequences in death. This first touch of death, in which innocence and shame and pure feeling have been withered, is followed by a more penetrating deadliness over a widening area. The first sin is like the first speck of rottenness in the peach. It spreads. For death goes on to attack all the sweet relationships of life. You can never be the same son, the same brother, the same husband or wife, the same father or mother after you have sinned against these loyalties. The bloom of the heart has been despoiled. The romance of life is gone. Something has come between you and all life's sweetest intimacies, and that something is a withered faculty touched by death.

This sequence of death continues its course. There is one sphere where sin's penalty is sadly evident. That is in the body. The loathsome sore that will not heal, the evident corruption in the blood, the shattered nerve, are all part of the wages of death. These are not the scars which honest toil and self-sacrificing strain have marked upon a man's features and frame. When Gehazi came into the presence of Elisha his innocence was slain, and the loyal relationship to his master had been outraged. But as he stood before the prophet the next sequence in the penalty took place. His sin spread death in his body, and he went out of the presence of the Lord, 'a leper as white as snow.' That visitation upon Gehazi is more dramatic than we commonly see, but it is no accident that the sin of a man's soul passes on to quench the life of his body.

But the penalty of death has issues and consequences beyond the sinner himself. It passes out to others, often to his dearest. A little child's faith and reverence has been slain by the self-indulgence, the foul jest, the angry temper of those who were its guides. The home that should have been a sanctuary has become a place where all aspiration dies at its birth. There are graves which men dare not visit, for the dead who lie in them yet speak in condemnation of the self-will and passion of those who can never forget their green mounds.

¶ That is the worst of the wages of sin. Sinners cannot pay them all—however willing, however passionately desirous even they may be to do so. Those wages are always paid in part, of necessity must be, by the innocent in place of the guilty.[1]

¶ There is a large green night moth which flits by moonlight through the high forest lands of New Zealand. This moth comes from a caterpillar, and its curious life-story has been related by Dr J. J. North of the New Zealand Baptist College.

'When first white men came upon this creature they assumed that they had discovered a plant that imitated, for some protective reason, a caterpillar. But the Maori, rich in bush lore, knew better. He regarded Aweto, for so he called him, as a fallen god, for some fault doomed to become a vegetable. The exact story has now been unravelled. The Maori was nearer the truth than the first English investigator.

[1] Lucas Malet.

The caterpillar is attacked by the spores of a certain fungus. The spores work within his skin and make him very miserable. He plunges into the moss on the forest floor to escape his torment. It is vain. Slowly but surely all his interior organs are replaced with vegetable substance. The skin is unhurt. He still to all appearance is a caterpillar, on his way towards his great transformation. In fact, he has fallen a whole kingdom, and will never know the raptures of a nuptial flight under the solemn moon. From his snout there presently sprout two shoots that lift themselves above the ground, and bear a small bag containing the same fatal spores that were his destruction, and which through him will be the destruction of many of his kind.'

(3) Then mark the final issue of death. That is its dominion in the soul. 'Sin,' writes James, 'when it is finished bringeth forth death.' He is thinking of sin as though it were born a feeble and undeveloped child coming to its maturity and then giving birth to death—the death of the soul. For what is the last issue of death but to lose the power to hope in God, and to have the old relentings and repentings of younger years? The man who once longed to be Christlike, who knew that righteousness and peace and joy were the supreme blessings of life, who had been on the brink of a complete surrender, may close his life in a spiritual torpor. For here we see the decisive proof of death. It is not the failure of the functions of the soul. It is not the lack of response to the call of Christ. It is corruption. When, then, the soul has become so corrupt that it can plunge into moral slime without a qualm the full wages of sin has been paid.

¶ Shakespeare draws his corrupt soul, not in Lady Macbeth washing her sin-stained hands, not in Richard III aghast at the procession of the murdered which seems to stretch out to the crack of doom, but in Iago, whom neither innocence, nor honour, nor trust, nor love will move.

> When devils will the blackest sins put on,
> They do suggest at first with heavenly shows,
> As I do now . . .
> So will I turn her virtue into pitch,
> And out of her own goodness make the net
> That shall enmesh them all.

2. *The Gift of God is Eternal Life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*—Life is always a gift. The seed which was cast into the ground will burst and its green blade will appear. How, its sower knows not. The life is a gift. A little child was born to-day. His mother heard his infant cry with a catch in her heart. She marked his soft breathing and found it music. Whence came that pulsating, breathing life? Life is a gift. A man was born again to-day. He had been drifting into ways of rebellion. He had ceased to feel the goad in his conscience. He had forgotten how to pray. Then a word, a child's voice, a woman's appeal, a bereavement awoke him. He was touched to the quick, and moved to penitence and trust. How? He cannot tell. Eternal life is the gift of God.

'Through Jesus Christ our Lord.' That is the indispensable condition. This eternal life visits the soul only through Jesus Christ. Shall we say that there was no spiritual life before Christ came, and that men who sought after God did not find Him? Surely there was life, but it was not 'life in Christ' with its experiences and its potencies. The certainty and fact of eternal life in Christ can be realized in this way. We cannot say that the men who knew the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob had not received the gift of life. We cannot say that millions of whom Abraham was ignorant have not been quickened by this gift. But it is a great gift of God to live after our Lord. Life in Christ is a visitation such as the old Hebrew times never knew. Had Abraham, ascending his green hill, Moriah, found the Cross uplifted on its summit; or had Moses, on the mountain-top, looked into the transfigured face of the Son of God; or had David lifted his eyes of shame, not to Nathan, with his rebuke, but to Christ, with His look, what a gate of new life would have been opened before them all! Abraham would have made no sacrifice. Moses would have summed up his commandments in one great call to love. David would have fallen down to kiss Christ's feet and wet them with his tears. A new light would have shone within their minds, a new peace have been given to their consciences, and an uprush of crucified desires would have found expression in their lives.

3. *Every Man must Face these Alternatives.*—The Apostle sets down these two truths as alter-

natives, and there are only two. Every man is passing on either through the sequences of death, or the sequences of life. Tender and sensitive minds have shrunk from accepting this stern truth, but we cannot accept, even to escape our saddening thoughts, the teaching that the immortality of the soul is an illusion. Rather, with Martineau, it is true 'nothing human ever dies.' What Paul says is not that men have life, but that they have *eternal life* in Christ. Immortal existence that cannot be quenched is not eternal life. A man may live, and love, and hope, and play a high and serious part in the moral endeavour of earth and time. He may never have known, or cared to know, Him whom to know is life eternal. He may never have had the vision of the unseen, the shame of penitence, and the joy of reconciliation. He may never have been conscious of the indwelling power of Christ. He will pass into the world beyond the grave without eternal life. Life without Christ is possible here. Life without Christ is possible hereafter. Eternal life in this world and in every other world must be the gift of God. There are, therefore, the two alternatives —death or life. If a man will pass on in his own self-willed, headstrong way, if he will refuse to yield up his soul and his life to God, if he will disdain to accept that new principle and transforming energy which Christ alone can give, he will, in the moment of his refusal, enter the shadow of death, and he will find it deepening its darkness until the light is gone.

¶ When Jean Valjean, in Victor Hugo's great novel *Les Misérables*, came to the end of his redeemed and recreated life, he uttered these words: 'It is nothing to die. It is a terrible thing not to live.'

There is a season on the earth when the year is at the spring, and life comes down upon it out of heaven from God. There is also a season in the experience of the soul. That season is at hand when a man is discovered to himself by the power of the Holy Spirit; and a new craving for fellowship with God, and a new desire to walk with Christ in the strength of truth and purity, awaken within the soul. Then comes the hour when a prayer, a decisive vow, a single look upward, may be the opening of the door through which Christ enters to be life and light for ever.

The Gift of Eternal Life

Rom. vi. 23.—'The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord' (R.V.).

1. What is the 'eternal life' which is here spoken of? It is endless life, undoubtedly, but it is more than that. The adjective points to something beyond mere duration. The phrase must be interpreted in the light of the words that follow. And here the Revised Version renders us, as so often, incalculable service. When we read (as in the Authorized Version) 'The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord,' we recognize, as Bishop Westcott says, 'A general description of the work of Christ, of what He has wrought for us, standing apart from us.' But what Paul really wrote was, 'Eternal life *in* Jesus Christ our Lord,' that is to say, 'Life is not an endowment apart from Christ, it is Himself, and enjoyed in Him.' Now we see that the adjective 'eternal' is not quantitative only, but qualitative also; it indicates not endlessness simply, but a certain kind of life, the best and highest kind, life in Christ, the very life of God Himself.

But if this be so, 'eternal life' is not a gift for the bestowal of which we must look in the world to come. Not till then, indeed, can it be ours in its fullness, for not till then will the conditions be possible in which, alone, it can fully manifest itself; but in measure at least it may be ours here and now. We read of one who was dead '*while she liveth*'; but are sin's dread wages paid on this side the grave, and does God bid us wait till we are beyond it? No, 'He that hath the Son *hath* the life.' What we have may be but the 'earnest' of what we are yet to have, but it *is* the earnest, and the 'inheritance' itself will be like it in character, though infinitely greater in degree.

¶ Buddha, in his day, used to puzzle his disciples by the ways—apparently conflicting—in which he spoke about Nirvana. For sometimes he would talk about it as future, as a glorious hope, as the far-off Blessedness that waited at the end for faithful folk. Yet often, perhaps just as often, he described it as a present possibility, as a Blessedness which loyal hearts should strive to have, aye, and could have, here and now. Until at last, completely confused, his disciples came asking, 'Tell us plainly, is it present, or is it future?' And he

answered, 'It is both.' Apparently it is the ideal, the best of which the mind can think, which begins here, but ultimately widens into something better, fuller, richer, into the Best possible, upon the other side.[1]

2. If, now, we understand something of what is meant by 'eternal life,' may we not say that this 'eternal life' is the salvation which in the gospel is offered to man? How does this 'eternal life' become the possession of man? The answer—the astonishing answer—of Paul is that it is 'the free gift of God.' We must remember that all Paul's theology was rooted in his experience. That is the secret of its wonderful vitality. 'Justification by faith,' 'sanctification through the Spirit' may be to us mere intellectual counters, the technical terms of a lifeless theology; but to him they were vital processes. And so, when he says 'the free gift of God is eternal life,' he is not speculating; he is declaring a fact of experience.

That is a conception of salvation that nowadays is often lost sight of. Salvation, we think, is to be from within, it must be wrought out by ourselves, it will come to us only as the last result of long and laborious striving. To many of us to-day religion means, primarily, the straining after a high ideal, the girding of the soul for high endeavour, the marshalling of all life's scattered forces at the blowing of the trumpets of God. Salvation is to be *won*, and so at last it will be a wage that may be justly demanded, rather than a free gift to be humbly received.

And of course there is much in all this that is profoundly true. Where this striving and this high ideal are not, the eternal life is not possible; where they are, even though they be alone, much may be accomplished. But it was not so that Paul conceived the gospel. If to us religion's first and greatest word be 'strive, endeavour, attain,' we are separated from the Apostle by a whole diameter; for to him it said, 'Humble thyself, and receive.' The gospel was to him not good advice, but good news; it told, first of all, not of something to do, but of something done. No word indicates more clearly the whole drift of Paul's thinking on this matter than the word 'grace.' By 'grace' are we saved; and 'grace' speaks not of the doing of man, but of the giving of God. Salvation is not a hard-won wage paid down by the just Overseer of life; it is the bounty of love, the gift of grace.

Rest, weary soul!
The penalty is borne, the ransom paid
For all thy sins full satisfaction made;
Strive not to do thyself what Christ has done,
Claim the free gift, and make the joy thine own;
No more by pangs of guilt and fear distrest,
Rest, sweetly rest!

3. We might sum up the difference between these two opposite conceptions of the Christian life by saying that the one makes God the centre of religion, the other finds it in man. We do not mean, of course, that this distinction is consciously present to the minds of those who make it, but that, practically, that is what it results in. Are we not in danger of reviving in religion the blunder of the old astronomy, which made the earth the centre of all things? We often hear it said that the old Calvinism is dead. Those who say it have often no very exact idea of what they mean by 'Calvinism,' though their rough-and-ready judgment is not without a basis in fact. But Calvinism, in the supreme place it gives to God, in its unwavering insistence that salvation is of God, and not of man, is from without and not from within, can never die. The word 'grace' is the characteristic word of Calvinism, and there is no word that we need more to get back into our thinking and life.

¶ 'I believe,' says Ruskin, 'that the root of almost every schism and heresy from which the Christian church has ever suffered, has been the effort of men to earn, rather than to receive, their salvation; and that the reason that preaching is so commonly ineffectual is, that it calls on men oftener to work for God than to behold God working for them.'

(1) Why is it that many of us have so little gladness in our Christian life? Is it not just for this very reason, that we have put self instead of God at the centre of it? We have talked and lived as if the whole responsibility of our salvation rested on our own weak shoulders. And since, naturally enough, we doubt our own strength, we are never sure, never at rest. 'I am persuaded that *I* am able to keep. . . .' We dare not say that; and as we never knew the Apostle's noble faith, '*He*

[1] A. J. Gossip, *From the Edge of the Crowd*, 75.

is able to keep,' we are without any 'persuasion' at all; and instead of a ringing certainty we have only, at best, a tremulous hope. Some of us may have seen the little engraving that adorns the title-page of Dora Greenwell's beautiful books: a hand grasping a cross, and about it this motto, *Et teneo et teneor*, 'I both hold and am held.' We remember that we must hold, but we forget that we are also held, held of God. Let us dare to believe that Jesus meant what He said when of His sheep He declared, 'No one shall snatch them out of my hand.'

¶ When Cromwell the Protector was dying he asked his minister, 'Tell me, is it possible to fall from grace?' 'No, it is not possible.' 'Then I am safe, for I know that I was once in grace.' And again, 'I think I am the poorest wretch that lives: but I love God; or rather am beloved of God.'

Let me no more my comfort draw
  From my frail hold of Thee,
In this alone rejoice with awe
  Thy mighty grasp of me.

(2) Why is it, again, that we make so little progress in the Christian life? Why is our love, our trust, so dwarfed and stunted? Is not the answer the same? Self is at the centre, where only God should be. But the soul never grows by the contemplation of itself. Love cannot be forced like some hot-house plant. It must be set in the light and sunshine of love; then it springs up of itself. Trust grows in the presence of the wholly trustworthy. Therefore, 'Look unto *me*, and be ye saved' must be the law of all our life.

(3) And if once more we ask, Why is it that so many to-day hesitate even to enter upon the Christian life? is not one answer at least this, that they wholly misconceive religion? They are weary and overburdened, and religion seems to add new burdens. How, then, should they seek it? But Christianity is salvation from without. It tells, not of something that man must do, but of something done for man. Paul says, 'I delivered unto you, first of all—that is, among the first things—*how that Christ died for our sins*.' The gospel does not mock the weary with fresh demands for toil; it tells them where they may lean their weariness. It is not another burden it offers, but strength, God's strength, wherewith to carry all our burdens. Shall we not come as humble suppliants, and gladly take the gift He offers?

'Tis through Thy love alone we gain
  The pardon of our sin;
The strictest life is but in vain,
  Our works can nothing win;
That none should boast himself of aught,
But own in fear Thy grace hath wrought
What in him seemeth righteous.

Wherefore my hope is in the Lord,
  My works I count but dust,
I build not there, but on His word,
  And in His goodness trust.
Up to His care *myself* I yield,
He is my tower, my rock, my shield,
And for His help I tarry.

The Need for Discipline

Rom. vii. 6.—'We have been discharged from the law' (R.V.).

Rom. vii. 12.—'The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and righteous, and good' (R.V.).

1. In St Paul's Epistles we find the sustained polemic against the Jewish Law somewhat wearisome, until we realize that the legalism or formalism against which he is contending is a permanent tendency, being in fact the disease of which most religions die, if religions ever do die. Legalism or formalism is always a perversion, not a legitimate phase of development. The Jewish Law in its arrogant completeness was later than the prophet. This is an important thing to remember, as the traditional dates of the books of the Old Testament would lead us to think otherwise. Possibly St Paul himself hardly realized that Pharisaism only began when the living stream of prophecy had run dry. Religion turns into formalism, just as scholarship turns into pedantry, when its real object and its connection with life as a whole are forgotten. Formalism is the sterile decay of religion.

But this is only one side of the truth. The Law, as even St Paul says, is holy and righteous and good. We must have discipline as well as freedom, obedience as well as liberty. Religion always moves between these two opposite points—the feeling of absolute dependence on God, who claims from us unconditional and

unhesitating obedience, and, on the other hand, the consciousness of freedom, of sonship, of fellowship and communion with God. The truly religious life is not only conscious of these feelings, but knows that they do not contradict each other. St James speaks of the perfect law, the law of liberty, and the beautiful Collect beginning—to translate it literally—'God, whom to know is to live, whom to serve is liberty,' teaches us how, in complete self-dedication to God's purpose concerning us, and by making that purpose our own, we can alone enjoy perfect freedom.

2. Difficulties, however, may still be felt about that class of observance which holds an intermediate place between works of utility and pure devotion. What is the proper attitude for the Christian to take with regard to such matters as the observance of holy days, public worship, stated hours for prayer and Bible reading, fasting, and so forth? We know that to many people the very life of religion seems to consist in these observances. To them the religious man or woman is the Churchgoer. And on the other hand there is the large and increasing class of honest men who do not live beneath the shadow of the steeple. The prevailing feeling is that which is attributed by his biographer to the headmaster of Uppingham: 'Fasting—I cannot see the use of it. To the man who tries to do his duty life is a perpetual fast.' The question is a very difficult one. During the greater part of the history of the Church the tendency has been to emphasize positive goodness, and to identify religion too much with these observances. It was a danger which to St Paul, the ex-Pharisee, seemed always the most present. In one place he deprecates the observance of holy days, yet within a hundred years after his death a very unedifying controversy was raised, and the Churches which St Paul had founded were ready to excommunicate each other for keeping Easter on different days. This tendency has proved very strong in all parts of Christendom.

But in our generation the volume of discipline has been greatly relaxed. We see everywhere a growing contempt for all rule and tradition. Churchgoing is passing more and more out of fashion. Good Friday has been turned into a bank holiday. Sunday is sharing the same fate. Family prayer and Bible reading are much less general than they used to be. People do not see why they should do these things. They doubt if they really do them any good, and so one irksome restraint after another is abandoned, and it is difficult to point to any single thing which the average adult Englishman does or leaves undone of his free will because he is a Churchman.

3. All this does not necessarily mean that Christianity is decaying. It would be possible to find respectable reasons for the growing neglect of observances as part of religion. But surely, if we are honest, we must admit that one reason for the change is that we are becoming a self-indulgent, self-loving people, impatient of all restraint, averse from all discipline, and above all things are enjoying life by refusing restrictions, and multiplying amusements and excitement. We are willing to help each other on co-operative principles. We are ready to subscribe to any scheme which promises to give innocent pleasure to a large number of people, but anything in the way of self-chosen hardship seems to us ridiculously medieval, and if it is connected with the saving of our souls we stigmatize it as selfish and morbid.

Now this greediness for pleasure is a real danger, and one of the best ways of recovering from it is to revive respect for religious observances, chiefly as a means of discipline. This, of course, does not include private prayer and Holy Communion, for no Christian can possibly neglect either. If we do not wish to take our troubles, our sorrows, our hopes, and even our pleasures into God's presence we must be strangely indifferent to the Fatherhood of God, which has so large a place in the glad tidings of the gospel. And if we do not value the refreshing of our souls with the Body and Blood of Christ, we must be strangely indifferent to that union with Christ which is the highest of all human privileges.

But it is desirable that we should do more than say our prayers and communicate. It is not only a duty to attend Divine worship frequently, but such acts are part of the discipline which we all need, and so are useful as tests that we are willing to do something for God. We hear the comfortable, self-indulgent worldling talk about asceticism, but it is very much easier to fall below asceticism than

to rise above it. Not that we wish to recommend the method of the cloister. Hard work, at all events when it is disinterested, is a far better discipline than fasting and penance. It must be left to each hard-working man to consider whether anything further is needed for his soul's health than the continual self-denial which his work involves. But we must remember that asceticism simply means training, as men train for a race. And whether we think of it in the worldly sense or in regard to progress in the spiritual life, we do not see enough of that spirit which St Paul describes so finely to the Corinthians: 'Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown: but we an incorruptible. I therefore run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it under subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.'

¶ In his forty-sixth year Dr Samuel Johnson set down certain resolutions on a page of his diary. 'Having lived, not without an habitual reverence for the Sabbath, yet without that attention to its religious duties which Christianity requires, I resolve henceforth (1) To rise early, and, in order to do that, to go to sleep early on Saturday. (2) To make use of some special devotion in the early morning. (3) To examine the tenor of my life, and particularly the last week, and to mark my advances in religion, or my recessions from it. (4) To read the Scriptures methodically with such helps as are at hand. (5) To go to church twice.'

¶ There are few pleasures to be compared with the sense of growing self-mastery, of increasing purposefulness in our daily lives, which is the reward of frequently thwarting and contradicting our lower selves, and gaining, what is better still, an increased clearness of spiritual vision, by which, as the eyes of our understanding are enlightened, we see more and more clearly into the Divine heart of things. Purification, self-discipline, is, and has been proved a thousand times, a necessary road to that enlightenment which leads up to the face of God.[1]

[1] W. R. Inge.

The Reality of Sin

Rom. vii. 7.—'I had not known sin, but by the law.'

1. Every age has its own currents and tendencies of thought; they spring up mysteriously, one can scarcely tell where; they die down again sometimes as mysteriously as they arose, leaving behind them their own deposit of thought and experience. No doubt there have been ages in which a morbid and exaggerated view of sin has been taken, and these ages have left, as their permanent deposit, schools of thought which still take a morbid and disproportionate view of sin.

¶ One recalls Newman's famous sentence, often quoted: 'The Church holds that it were better for sun and moon to drop from heaven, for the earth to fail, and for all the many millions who are upon it to die of starvation in extremest agony so far as temporal affliction goes, than that one soul, I will not say should be lost, but should commit one single venial sin, should tell one wilful untruth, though it harmed no one, or steal one poor farthing without excuse.'

But though there have been ages which took a morbid view of sin, and though there are schools of thought abiding through the ages which take a view of it perhaps more ecclesiastical than ethical, it would scarcely be said that this is the dominant error of our time. Partly as a revolt against extreme statements and morbid, one-sided views, the tendency of the hour is very much the other way. There are very few of us who are in danger of going about the world crying, like Lancelot Andrewes, that we are hyperboles of sin; and we are quite content to leave Paul in majestic solitude as the chief of sinners. Viewing the matter in its broader aspects, many people feel that sin is a theological word, a word out of contact with reality, to be quietly dropped from our vocabulary.

2. There are various ways of testing and measuring the reality of sin. We shall select one only, and set the reality of sin where it is best seen—against the background of the moral standard; for the reality of sin bears a very direct relation to the amount of ethical light a man or a community possesses. The older teaching on this subject, while it saw clearly

and emphasized most forcibly, the reality of sin, failed somewhat in making clear its relativity; it grouped sin and sinners too much in a lump and on a level, and so, for many minds, introduced an element of unreality into the whole conception. A thing is relative when it does not exist absolutely and of itself, but in relation and proportion to something else; and most of the matters with which our æsthetic and moral judgments deal are relative. Comfort is a relative thing: a house that was reckoned comfortable in the time of Henry VIII would not be reckoned comfortable to-day—we have a higher standard. Good manners are relative things. Now, sin also is relative; it is relative to knowledge and to light. Suppose the case of men who do wrong, not knowing any better. In such a case what we have is not sin in the strict sense of the word. There is misfortune; there is disease, if you like, and the curse of heredity handed down. We might say that there is evil, because this ignorant wrongdoing is a contribution to the sum of evil in the world, and ranks itself to outward observation with the evil rather than with the good. And of course the word sin is often loosely used to cover cases of that kind. But the very nerve of sin lies in the will; there is nothing strictly good but a good will, as Kant tells us in an immortal sentence, and there is nothing strictly bad but a bad will. Real sin, the 'sinfulness of sin,' emerges only when the will goes against whatever law or light or love is known to it. And when you have transgression in the case of one who does know better, it is no longer possible to call it by milder names; it is a lowering of the ethical standard to call it by milder names. It is sin; and the clearer, the fuller, the richer are the law and the light and the love that are transgressed, the more definite and dark and intensely real becomes the sin of him who transgresses against them.

3. St Paul says: 'I had not known sin, except by the law.' Sin would have lain in his life as a dormant thing, and would never have crept into his consciousness unless the Law of God had stood before him in its searching severity. But, in the presence of that Law, sin which otherwise would have been a mere defect or misfortune became exceeding sinful; it leapt into his consciousness as a reality, for the moment the dominant reality of experience, and he began to know the meaning of responsibility and of guilt.

Three points are of great importance.

(1) When we admit sin to be a relative thing we, by that very fact, admit it to be a real thing. Many of the most real things in the world are relative things. Comfort, as we have seen, is a relative thing, yet there is such a thing in every age as comfort and discomfort. Excellence in English composition is a relative thing: what might be classed as excellent in a schoolboy's essay might seem very mediocre indeed when compared with the work of experienced writers; but there is such a thing as good and bad English. So sin varies in the intensity of its sinfulness according to the amount of light there is to set over against it, but all along the line of history there is such a thing as sin, as surely as there are such things as righteousness, peace, and love. It is a negative reality—a shadow in the sunlight—because a failure to reach the standard which, from within or from without, has been proclaimed. Yet it is also a positive reality in so far as the wills of men choose the shadow for their sunlight, and say to evil, 'Be thou my good.'

(2) The reality of sin grows with the growing light. We acknowledge that principle in all our relationships with our fellow-creatures. A kitten jumps upon the table and steals some dainty. We punish the little thing to teach it not to repeat the offence, but that is not sin; the word sin does not apply in such a case; it is but acting out the law of its own being; it knows no better. A child puts forth his hand and takes some forbidden sweet; here are the beginnings of sin because the beginnings of knowledge; his conscience is uneasy until he has confessed and been forgiven; he knows what is right and he knows he ought to have obeyed. A stranger passing our window sees the window open and the room empty; he puts in his hand and steals something; that is sin so great that we call in the law of the land to put a stop to it. He knows the law, he knows the thing is ours and not his, and his sin is proportioned to his knowledge. Now take that idea and project it a little more largely upon history. Here are the animals; they have their cruelties, their lusts, their passions, yet these things are not sin in them, because they know no better. Here are men—savage men

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—men just beginning to be men; a part of their manhood is a dim sense of what ought to be. It may be, to begin with, only some tribal law binding on all the members of the clan, or some law of ethnic religion acknowledged by the sentiment of the community; it is the beginning of law, and side by side with it in the man's conscience there is the beginning of the sense of sin, his uneasiness when he fails to obey the law that he knows. Pass to higher levels. We find in the literature of the Old Testament a moral standard preserved somewhat unique in the ancient world; commandments are still fitted to be a guide for men; best of all, an ethical God, a God with a character, who can be worshipped with the conscience as well as with the heart. And what do we find over against it? The Penitential Psalms—Psalms which are as sobs of a broken heart. Beside the heightened ideal there is the deepened sense of the reality of sin. Now turn to the New Testament and to the moral standard made perfect in Jesus Christ, revealed with a fullness of grace and beauty never known before. Over against it there is, of course, a quickened conscience and a deepened sense of sin even amid the consciousness that the great victory over sin has been gained.

¶ On one occasion Dr Chalmers was at Skirling and paid a visit to the village school. By way of teaching the children, he gave them a blackboard demonstration of spiritual truth. He drew a long line on the board, and then, treating the line as though it were the diameter of a circle, he put a circumference round it. 'You must all see,' he said, 'that the longer the diameter of light, the greater the surrounding circumference of darkness, and the shorter the diameter of light, the smaller the surrounding darkness.'

(3) All this leads to the thought that of all things which an advanced civilization can afford to dispense with, the last is a sense of sin. We are supposed to be living in an advanced civilization; it is a pleasant assumption; relatively, at least, it is true. If we be advanced in civilization it means this among other things, that the light has grown to some fullness with us, that we have ideals heightened and enriched by the experiences of the ages. Now, if the sense of sin dies from us in such circumstances, it means one of two things. It may mean that all our ideals are realized, and that we have reached social and individual perfection. Is that our happy case? God knows, and we know, that it is not. Well then, the only thing it can mean is that our ideals have lost their power over us, and we are content to be as we are. And that is death; if that be so, then we perish in presence of our impotent ideals for sheer lack of vision and of desire. For our individual lives that must not be; we must keep alive a sense of sin sufficient to spur us upwards and onwards. And for our community that must never be; we must keep alive at least sufficient sense of sin to breed a crop of prophets and reformers as it did in the days of old. A sense of sin is the saving of a man or of a nation.

4. Now, for ourselves there ought to be two practical consequences—the first a great fear, and the second a great hope.

(1) The first should be *a great fear*, Chrysostom's fear. An empress sent the golden-mouthed preacher a threatening message. His answer was, 'Go, tell her I fear nothing but sin.' That, after all, is the supreme thing to be afraid of—that God should give us a law and we refuse to obey it, that God should manifest His love and we refuse to respond to it. There is nothing quite so truly and ethically dreadful as this.

(2) But the second result should be *a great hope*. Sin is a grim word, but it is also a hopeful word. G. K. Chesterton somewhere says that the doctrine of sin is the logical basis of optimism, and his daring paradox is a mighty truth. Sin means something abnormal, something unnecessary, something out of joint with the final purpose of God. It means a disease to be cured. It means an enemy to be fought with. It means an intruder to be cast out. So this grim word is the gateway, after all, to infinite possibility. It is a fingerpost pointing to Christ. There are in the last resort only two stages in a man's spiritual education: the first is sin, and the second is Christ, and he who understands sin understands Christ; he who feels the reality of sin is ready to receive the reality of grace.

¶ 'There is only one terrible and fearful thing in the world, and that is sin,' writes a German theologian; 'and there is only one thing precious and great; it is not the world and it is not of the world; it is the power of God, which becomes Lord over the sinner and sin.'

The True Self

Rom. vii. 17.—'So now it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me' (R.V.).

Here, and in the chapter as a whole, St Paul tells us of his own inner life, with its struggle between good and evil. The experience he describes is one of which we are all conscious—a higher and a lower self ceaselessly engaged in painful conflict. While all are conscious of this humiliating duality within the personal life, the Apostle distinctly teaches that our better self is the true self. 'So now it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me.' The thought of St Paul is that there is something in us deeper than sin. In our heart of hearts we consent unto the law of righteousness, although practically we disobey it. Sin he regards as a foreign element which mars the integrity of our nature, and brings into experience and consciousness the bitterest suffering of life; yet all the while the original, profounder self sympathizes with goodness.

1. That our better self is the truer self is a fact that encourages us *as we seek to work out our personal salvation*. As soon as we reach consciousness we are horrified to find, as it were, two hostile tenants in the house of life. Guided, however, by the light of revelation, we discover to our comfort that they are not two tenants, but a tenant and a burglar. Sin has broken into the world and made sad havoc of human nature, yet it has no primitive right, no legal standing; its expulsion in the nature of things is possible, and in the power of Christ it is actually mastered and expelled. Carry the thought deep enough, and we find that human nature is noble and divine. But some will say, Has not sin become a 'second nature' to us? Exactly so, a 'second nature'; terrible and profound, yet second only. There is great encouragement in the fact that our nature was fashioned on the lines of truth, delight in goodness. It is a matter of infinite moment whether we are working with our nature or against it, and we have the deep joy of knowing that whenever we long for righteousness and strive towards it, however our second nature may embarrass us, our original, inalienable nature is with us.

¶ When Moloch urged the fallen host to attempt once more their native heaven, he reminded them of a striking fact, forgotten by them in their panic, namely, that it was far easier for them to fly up than to sink.

> In our proper motion we ascend
> Up to our native seat; descent and fall
> To us is adverse. Who but felt of late,
> When the fierce foe hung on our broken rear
> Insulting, and pursued us through the Deep,
> With what compulsion and laborious flight
> We sunk thus low? The ascent is easy, then.

There is a flippant aphorism to the effect that it is easy to descend, but the far deeper truth is that at every step of our descent we must violate the fine instincts of the body; we must struggle with the authority of conscience; we must beat down our sense of self-respect; we must snap asunder one after another those various social bonds which bind us to better behaviour. We were fashioned in the likeness of God, and ours is an upward-seeking instinct. It is hopeless to work against the real constitution of anything—against its grain, its original bias, its inborn tendency and gravitation; but this is not the case when we work towards the true, the beautiful, and the good. Our deepest nature is with us when we aspire towards God; His law is already in our heart.

¶ Ever since the Epistle to the Romans was written, it has become a Christian commonplace that, in all moral experience, I am divided against myself; inwardly identified with a superior call that beckons me; outwardly liable to take my lot with the inferior inclination that clings to me. In such conflict, whatever be its issue, the *real* self is always that which votes for the good; conformably with Plato's rule, that no man, of *his own will* (though, possibly, of blind impulse), ever decides for the worse. If I choose aright, the previous strife is laid to rest, and my nature is at one with itself and its own ends. If I choose amiss, the storm within is fiercer than before; I rage against my own temptation; and if the fact be known, I am ashamed to walk abroad and carry about so false an image of myself.[1]

2. There is encouragement here *in our efforts to win others to Christ*. It was to this higher

[1] Martineau.

self that Jesus appealed. He knew it was there, in publican and outcast, however deeply trampled down by the powers of evil. Deepest of all, there was that in every human being which constituted him a child of the Heavenly Father. Jesus was confident of this, and therefore His appeal was not made in vain to many who were despised and neglected by the religious teachers of the time. It was to this inner man also that His apostles appealed. This man within was always on the side of God, the holy, the just, and the good.

We are often called to deal with apparently hopeless cases of character. Sometimes we find it peculiarly disheartening to witness the miseries and evils of society. But we must not allow ourselves to be paralysed by what we see. There is more than we see; below the ugly surface there are elements of good, possibilities of recovery, sources of hope even when things are at their worst. The best feelings of men are with us, their conscience is with us, their aspiration and hope are with us, everything that is deepest in them is with us. Upon this indisputable fact we should fix our eye, and towards these nobler elements and sentiments address ourselves.

¶ Ruskin says: 'There is hardly a road-side pond or pool which has not as much landscape *in* it as above it. Nay, the ugly gutter, that stagnates over the drain-bars in the heart of the foul city, is not altogether base; down in that, if you will look deep enough, you may see the dark serious blue of far-off sky, and the passing of pure clouds.'

¶ It is one of the striking things in Channing how the importance of honouring and trusting what is best in the native powers of man seems to lie at the very heart of all his religious belief and teaching—this sense of the dignity of human nature—of the worth of souls. 'It is not strange,' writes one who, as a youth, came under Channing's influence and learned to honour him, 'that men were impressed by the way in which he even spoke the words, The Human Soul; for that phrase, often so thoughtlessly uttered, always brought to him a vision of the possibility of a diviner life; and all his faith and aspiration and hope and joy were in the tones of his voice when the words fell from his lips.'[1]

[1] D. Walmsley, in *The Outer and Inner World*, 85.

3. There is also encouragement to be found in this thought *as we attempt the evangelization of the world*. The Apostle of the Epistle to the Romans fully realizes the depth, power, and universality of sin. Whoever may treat lightly the problem of sin, it is not St Paul. Yet with equal sincerity and conviction he proclaims a gospel of boundless hope. He does this on two definite grounds: first, because he is satisfied that the foundations of the race were well and truly laid; and secondly, because God has not forsaken the work of His own hands—the whole Christian scheme is an all-convincing proof of this. Huxley propounded a fundamentally different theory of the world and life. He came to the conclusion that two distinct and contradictory methods prevail in the government of the world. There is, first, the cosmic order. This order has no sort of relation to moral ends; it proceeds on the lines of selfishness, deception, tyranny, and cruelty; it works through the lower nature of man, not for righteousness, but against it; the thief and murderer follow nature more closely than the philanthropist. Then, secondly, comes the ethical order. This is the programme which makes for justice, truth, mercy, harmony, civilization. So there are two distinct processes contending for the supremacy. Huxley, however, regards the cosmic order as the natural order, the power which makes for unrighteousness being in the very constitution of things; while the ethical order and development are artificial, the reformer and philanthropist being employed in building up an artificial world within, and despite a vicious cosmos. The position of St Paul is utterly different. He, also, is painfully conscious of the warring systems within Nature, but in his interpretation of them he unhesitatingly and firmly declares that the moral order is the natural order. In his view the dark things of Nature do not constitute or make any part of the real order of the world, they simply show that the true order has been thrown into confusion. The cosmic order is moral, the terrible things of earth and life are artificial and temporary. Truth springs out of the earth, and righteousness looks down from the stars. Nature, with her injustices, cruelties, miseries, is constantly starting up with an emphatic protest not to be misunderstood, 'I, yet not I, but sin which dwelleth in me.'

Man was made after the likeness of God's mind and will, and in the darkest lands we are witnesses that the Spirit of God keeps alive the divinest sentiments, instincts, and desires. 'And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us everyone, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.' St Paul saw in the savage islanders the diviner 'I.' Nansen detected at the North Pole the warm pulse of the Gulf Stream, and in the heart of paganism the Apostle joyfully welcomed, in the humanity of the barbarian, the glow of the Divine life. Upon this cheering fact let philanthropists and missionaries fix their eye; the fact that renders our hope so glorious, our sacrifices so rational.

The Inner Conflict

Rom. vii. 19.—'The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.'

This passage carries us down into the mysterious depths of our spiritual experience. Men are impatient of mystery in religion, they want everything reasoned out and demonstrated, and, all the while, that which is nearest to us —our own self—only seems the more mysterious the more we know of it. Our self is our ideal of unity, and yet within the one self there seem to be two selves, and two selves that are at war with each other. So we speak of a man's better self, and of his worse self. So we say of a friend who has fallen below what we and others expected of him: he was not himself there. So we speak of an individual as being swayed by his good angel or by his bad angel. What is it that gives its fascinating interest to the strange case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde but the knowledge that in the unity of our own personality a Jekyll and a Hyde in some strange way find a place for themselves?

¶ 'I desire,' says à Kempis, 'to enjoy Thee inwardly, but I cannot take Thee. I desire to cleave to heavenly things, but fleshly things and unmortified passions depress me. I will in my mind be above all things, but in despite of myself I am constrained to be beneath, so I, unhappy man, fight with myself and am made grievous to myself while the spirit seeketh what is beneath. O what I suffer within while I think on heavenly things in my mind; the company of fleshly things cometh against me when I pray.'

¶ 'O Master,' says the Scholar in Bœhme's great dialogue, 'the creatures that live in me so withhold me, that I cannot wholly yield and give myself up as I willingly would.'

Now it seems some unseen monster lays
His vast and filthy hands upon my will,
Wrenching it backward into his; and spoils
My bliss in being.[1]

1. In every experience of temptation we have an illustration of the divided self, but the experience which St Paul has here in view, though analogous, is somewhat different. We all know what it is to be within touch of the ampler life—the life of love, the life of devotion to the nobler ideals of the soul, the life of self-forgetting service—and to be shut out from it by spiritual powerlessness. The will is present with us, but to do that which is good is not. There are occasions when we can face and surmount great obstacles by the sheer force of will, but this is not one of them. With the best will in the world, we feel ourselves impotent; it is our will that is held in bondage. There is no help for us in mere struggling toward the higher good of which we have caught sight. The more we struggle the keener is the sense of our weakness, and the deeper is the despair into which we are thrown. Such was the experience of St Augustine. 'The enemy held my will, and made a chain for me and bound me. For from a perverse will lust was made, and in obeying lust habit was formed, and habit not resisted became necessity. By these links as it were, joined together—therefore I call it a chain—was I held, shackled with a hard bondage. But the new will which I began to have freely to worship thee, and to wish to enjoy thee, O God, the only true sweetness, was not yet strong enough to overcome that other will, strengthened by age. So these my two wills—the one old, the other new; the one carnal, the other spiritual —contended together, and by their discord disturbed my soul. . . . With what lashes of words did I not scourge my soul, that it might follow me, striving to go after thee. And it shrank back, it refused, though it had no excuse to offer.'

Principal Shairp says: 'When we read the lives of those men who have had the deepest

[1] Tennyson, *Lucretius*.

spiritual experience, to whom, on the one hand, the infinity of duty, the commandment exceeding broad, and, on the other, the depth of their own spiritual poverty, has been most laid bare—we find them confessing that the seventh chapter of Romans describes their condition more truly than any philosopher has done. To all such there is a grim irony in the philosophic ideas when confronted with their own actuals. So hopelessly wide seems the gap between their own condition and the "thou shalt" of the commandment. Not dead diagrams of virtue such men want, but living powers of righteousness. They do not quarrel with the moralists' ideal, though it is neither the saints' nor the poets'. They find no fault with his account of the faculty which discerns that ideal, though it is not exactly theirs. But what they ask is not the faculty to know the right, but the power to be righteous. It is because they do not find this, because what reason commands the will cannot be or do, that they are filled with despair.'

2. The thing for which above all else we long is that some power would lay hold of us, lift us out of our weakness and despair, and let us get away—away toward the fuller life which is drawing us toward itself. This is our deepest want; for this there is almost nothing we would not willingly sacrifice. With what new zest we could throw ourselves upon life's tasks, if only this power might come into our life, if only we might get rid of that which baffles the better self and brings us into captivity to the lower self, if only some release might take place, if only the tide of spiritual life might flow and bear us out beyond the forbidding bar that blocks our way to the great ocean.

Well, this power is the gift Christ has come to bestow. As He Himself said: 'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly'—life and all life's wealth—love, inspiration, freedom, expansiveness, inward peace, victorious hope—life that swallows up the sense of discord and weakness and despair.

It was here that Paul found the glowing heart of the gospel—in the power that came to him through Christ to resolve the discord between the inward man that delighted in the law of God, and the law in his members that brought him into captivity to sin. Here also was the significance of religion for St Augustine. 'Let my heart and tongue praise thee,' so he speaks to God as he looks back upon the day when, by a serene light as it were infused into his heart, the weary struggle of the divided self was ended, 'say unto my soul, I am thy salvation. . . . Where during those many years, and from what deep and low recess was my free will called forth in a moment, so as to place my neck under thy easy yoke, and my shoulders to thy light burden, O Christ Jesus, my helper and my Redeemer.'

Augustine could not explain how this new experience, with the accession of spiritual power it involved, came to him, nor could Paul say much more about his experience than that it pleased God to reveal His Son in him. There is a mystery where the Spirit of God touches the spirit of man. But we know that this incoming of the Spirit of God—if it is one of life's mysteries is also life's supreme reality, life's supreme good. It is this quickening, this revival, of the life of the Spirit, for which we seek in our religious services, it is this after which we aspire in every better moment. Empty, dry, and weak we may feel our hearts to be, but God is near with the tide of the Spirit. Let us wait on Him that we may know the blessedness of a renewal of life and power.

¶ One of my most formidable enemies was a vivid and ill-trained imagination. Against outward and inward evils of this kind there existed a very powerful love of truth and purity, and great approval of and delight in the law of God. The antagonism of these two forces between the ages of twenty and twenty-six went nigh to threaten my reason. At length my deeply wounded conscience was pacified by faith in Christ, and a life of great happiness commenced, which still continues.[1]

The Cry for Deliverance

Rom. vii. 24.—'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'

This is not the verse we should naturally think of in remembering St Paul; rather do we associate the strong Apostle of the Gentiles with a word of triumph such as: 'In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us,' or with a word of deep and glad inner

[1] James Smetham.

experience: 'I live, and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me.' Yet we cannot say that in the deep gloom which broods over the latter part of this seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans St Paul is describing an experience he never knew; nor, though this has been the view of many commentators, that he speaks of the experiences of a time previous to his conversion. Whatever be the true setting of that experience, this at least remains certain—the Apostle knew the final problem of the human will at first-hand, knew it from inside, knew it in its abiding uncertainty and its prolonged torture, knew its final dilemma, 'The good that I would, I do not; the evil which I would not, that I do.' And then, as he realized what it all meant, the misery of it broke over him; there was no life in that state; and so from its depths he cries, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?'

Deliverance, not simply from the painful consequences of sin, but from sin itself, the power and tyranny of it—that is assuredly our first and greatest need. Our modern efforts to explain away moral responsibility merely show how eager we are to feel we are not responsible, and to rid us of the haunting sense of discomfort which our fathers called remorse, and which all our comforting theories cannot entirely banish. And all at some period of their life make an effort to escape from the bondage, to shake off 'the body of this death,' the horrible thing that clings to their very souls.

1. Many of us think that the great deliverer is simply Time. We seem to outgrow so many things—the toys of childhood, the high spirits of youth, our young and foolish thoughts and ambitions. All these we leave behind as the larger life of manhood lays hold of us. And thus, it is often thought, we can outgrow sin—leave it behind like the toys of childhood and the follies of youth.

And, indeed, there is sometimes an appearance of truth in this. Many a respectable and even venerable man of later life sowed in his youth his wild oats with lavish hand. Is he then really delivered from the body of this death? We will not say that this never happens, but it never happens by the passage of years alone. Time cannot be the saviour of the soul, and make God unnecessary. What usually happens is simply this. First of all, the impetuosity of youth cools. In the next place, time brings a change of mind—not the philosophic mind of which the poet speaks, far less the religious, but simply the respectable, the worldly. For the sake of his prospects in life a man pulls himself together, settles steadily to work, and in the end achieves worldly success and a good social standing.

All this is the history of multitudes of respectable men of the world. Have they, then, been truly delivered from 'the body of this death?' To begin with, such men have not, as they themselves imagine, got rid of their earlier sins and finally settled accounts with them. They are not so easily dismissed—they have inoculated the entire character with their poison; and ignoring them cannot make them as if they had never been. It follows that the failings of youth are not really outgrown—time has only transformed them into another kind of sin. Worldliness is the saviour of thousands; one demon casts out another. That is the extent of the deliverance mere time can work: it can create the worldly mind; it can *reform* sin from shape to shape; but we should never delude ourselves with the idea that it can do more.

¶ In one of Barrie's less known plays we have the picture of a man who at the age of fifty-seven suddenly lost all taste for the vice of secret drinking which had clung to him all his days. He imagined that he had conquered it, but his wife disillusioned him. 'Haven't I given it up? I broke myself of the habit,' cried the wretched man. To which his wife replied: 'Not as I have thought the thing out, Stephen. I don't think you gave it up; it gave you up. I was looking on. I saw. It wearied of you and left you. But it has come back now—for her. Easy enough to find a way back to the house, for such an old friend of yours.' His daughter had become a secret drinker. Old sins become old friends. The title of the play is *Old Friends*. The habit had given him up, but he had never really been weaned from it. He had no victory over it, which he could pass on to anyone else. The root of bitterness was still there. The fountain of appetite had simply dried up and left him in a state of fret and wretchedness.[1]

2. We come to a higher range of things when we turn to what is so much talked of nowadays

[1] E. Macmillan, *Seeking and Finding*, 200.

—the power, namely, of healthy interests to save from sin. The idea underlying this is that sin is the result of ignorance, of dull, colourless surroundings, of monotonous emptiness of life. Give men education, enlighten their minds, surround them with colour, music, brightness, give them healthy physical exercise, bring them into intimate contact with the great Mother, Nature, and the deliverance is accomplished.

And there is much truth in this. The employer, the Government that provides adequate opportunities for right amusement is serving God in a very real way. But can even such high interests accomplish the great and final deliverance of which St Paul is thinking? Other kinds of deliverance they can accomplish, but can they accomplish this? Do we not all know that many educated men whose lives were filled to overflowing with knowledge, colour, music, brightness have been swept by something within themselves into the deepest wrongdoing? Do we not know that again and again in the history of nations there have come ages when education, culture, art blossomed into a perfect poison-flower of luxury and excess which destroyed whole communities, so that, instead of being delivered from, they were delivered to, the body of this death?

Let us suppose, however, that education, art, culture can produce this external propriety. Can it pass inward and subdue the very desires of the heart to goodness? We know it cannot, and therefore it is powerless to do the one final and necessary thing. God can never be satisfied with external correctness alone. He loves truth in the secret soul, and can never rest till the very heart is changed within us.

¶ 'To get a man soundly saved it is not enough to put on him a new pair of breeches, to give him regular work or even to give him a university education. These things are all outside a man; and if the inside remains unchanged you have wasted your labour. . . . You must in some way or other graft upon the man's nature a new nature, which has in it the element of the divine. To change the nature of the individual, to get at the heart, to save his soul is the only real lasting method of doing him any good.'[1]

3. Time, culture, change of occupation or of scene—all these are things, and St Paul places his hope not in a thing, but in a Person. He does not say, *What* shall deliver me? but *Who?*—and the difference between these two short words pierces to the very heart of the whole subject. It is one thing to rely on a thing, quite another to rely on a person. This goes far deeper into our nature; for we are persons, and when personality touches personality springs of life may flow which mere things can never reach.

But the question remains—What person? Often a man resolves to be his own saviour. We let evil, whether obvious or of the spirit, sweep us on for a time, until in a desperate recoil of misery we set the teeth, and clench the hands, and harden ourselves with vows: yes, we will be men at last, and the tyrant weakness shall die. But the tyrant bides his time. In an hour the whole struggle breaks down, and we are only the weaker for another failure. The reason is plain enough. The person who is to deliver us is the same as he who is to be delivered. The very weakness against which he fights is the weakness which makes the fighting useless.

Do we not see how we are driven to the one Person who can really give deliverance? We have gone down one road after another, only to find that each ended in a moral *cul-de-sac*—a no-thoroughfare. We try things, but things are dead, and what we need is 'life, and life more abundant.' We try persons—ourselves and others; but we are all working within the circle of our own weakness and bondage.

4. Man is a prisoner within the body of this death, powerless of himself to break through his prison-house into the world of freedom. It is the very soul of the gospel that in Jesus Christ God Himself comes in all His wisdom, love, power, goodness to deliver us. It is not possible for any man humbly and honestly to place himself with all his sins, penitently, in Christ's hands without being able to say at last, with St Paul, 'I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord,' as he walks forth in the freedom wherewith He has made him free. Therefore let us give up foolish and weakening experiments.

Leave then thy foolish ranges;
For none can thee secure,
But One, who never changes,
Thy God, thy Life, thy Cure.

[1] William Booth, *In Darkest England*.

¶ In *John Inglesant*, Maltvoli, the wicked prisoner, is in his cell, waiting for Justice, with her scales and sword, to write finis at the end of the chapter. Suddenly in his dream he sees a bright form looking down upon him with eyes full of love. He hears the words: 'What doest thou here? I bought thee in the garden. I won thee upon the Cross. Thou wast mine with me when the tomb burst.' And Christ stretched out His hands of pleading love. Maltvoli sprang up to weep and beat upon his breast and pray and cry: 'He calls me. He loves me,' and in that tremendous moment of Divine vision he shouted to his sins: 'Oh, let me go!' And lo, the sins which had made him a slave and a criminal melted like fetters of ice, and the prisoner was free.[1]

The Healing Action of the Church

Rom. vii. 24.—'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'

So long as the world lasts this tragic experience of heart and conscience will be known and the Church of Christ will claim the power to cure, for if its gospel is not in action here, at that very point, in those lowest depths, where men and women need it most, it would be vain to look for it elsewhere. And in that healing action help will doubtless be gained from modern psychological discoveries, as more is learnt of the workings of the mind and will, and of the effects upon them of the sufferings which they experience. Surer will be the Church's grasp on all that may be needed to bring the broken will into touch with the healing and creative powers of Christ. And the old gospel of the grace of God who forgives our sins will become more intelligible and powerful when it is possible to read more clearly the mind of the sick man who needs the physician.

Let us consider two facts which stand out from this cry of the Apostle's—in the first place, the light that shines through its darkness, and, secondly, the responsibility that it throws upon others.

1. This cry of tormented conscience is not simply a cry of gloom, but from the gloom there bursts a passionate longing for deliverance, and while that longing lasts there is hope. He who wishes to be free has the possibility of freedom. It is the conscience acquiescent that is in the deadliest danger; it is the giving up of the fight that means the passing of hope; it is when the deep inward protest against evil ceases that the wound has sunk almost too deep for a cure. 'Quench not the Spirit,' said St Paul, and though it was of something else that he thought, we may apply his command to that voice of conscience which means, if anything means, that the Spirit moves and works within us.

Oh, dreadful is the check, intense the agony,
When the ear begins to hear, and the eye begins to see,
When the pulse begins to throb, the brain to think again—
The soul to feel the flesh, and the flesh to feel the chain.

Yet I would lose no sting, would wish no torture less;
The more the anguish racks, the earlier will it bless,
And robed in fires of hell, or bright with heavenly shine,
If it but herald death, the vision is divine.

And that longing for deliverance bears witness that the world is so made that deliverance is possible, that conscience does not mock us. Anyone who can say, as says the Apostle in the next verse, 'I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord,' knows that that very misery of his was God's opportunity. We remember, near the end of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, how almost from the gates of heaven there is a way to hell; and the reverse is true. The great sinner becomes the great saint; where sin abounded there—just in that one man or one woman—grace did far more abound, a grace more intense, more real than ever the sin was. Nothing is more distinctive of Christianity, of the gospel, than its claim and power to answer this desperate cry, 'Who shall deliver me?' And if ever that other saying of St Paul, 'For the word of the cross is, unto us which are being saved, the power of God,' which was for him the fullest and most compelling note of his evangel, could find no echo in Christian experience, then we could close our churches, and never again allow their

[1] L. A. Banks.

myriad memories descending upon us from the past to deceive us into supposing that they still mediated the life which is life indeed.

2. But the cry is not only light through darkness, not only a witness to hope, but a trumpet-call to the Church and to all Christian people to take up the burden of a common human responsibility. For that cry is a cry for help which only God indeed can give, but which again and again He gives through men. There are more ways than one in which that cry can be met, but first it must be heard and recognized for what it is. Not always are our ears open to that deep cry which rises from our brother's soul. This power of hearing those cries of need was one of the most blessed characteristics of our Lord's Humanity displayed before us in the gospel story. Think how again and again He says the word which shows that He knew the need of each longing soul. To the paralytic he says first—not Rise, take up thy bed, but—Thy sins are forgiven thee. To that woman of the city who was a sinner He speaks the assuring word which brings to her soul the certainty of her cleansing from the stains of her past life. To Zacchæus, seeking freedom from love of money, anxious to make amends for any wrongful exaction, He gives the great pledge of restored health of soul—'This day is salvation come to this house'—and seals that pledge by His own presence under the tax-gatherer's roof, and the willing enjoyment of his hospitality. And then the multitudes besides—those publicans and sinners unknown and unnumbered, those lost sheep upon the mountains—what was it that drew them to Him? Was it not this, at least, that He understood because He saw and heard all the burden of their souls? Because He could help, they found in Him what they found nowhere else, the sympathy and the power which alone could minister to their needs.

And now He calls His Church to see and to help, for always there are the souls that cannot express their needs till others find them out and enable them to speak. The help which He calls upon us to give makes its way not only through prescribed and long-proved channels. We would not for a moment undervalue such historic ways, ratified as they are in the repeated and abiding experience of Christian life. Through the preaching of the gospel comes the knowledge of the forgiveness of sins. In the gracious messages of the New Testament He is made known to us who is ever beforehand with us in the mercy which runs to meet us, and embraces us, while we are yet a long way off. All these are ways well tried, trodden by the heavenward footsteps of countless pilgrims, as true and firm to-day as ever. But the stricken conscience may need the insight and sympathy of the understanding heart before it can begin to respond to the gospel. How little we often think of word or tone or look! They may seem to go out into the void, to go from us—as the old Greeks would say—unwinged; and yet it is just because they do go unwinged that they fail in what they have the power to do, for by tone or look or word we can reach the hearts of others far more often than we know. This does not mean that we should always be consciously thinking of it; that would be to run the risk of lapsing into an unnatural and quite unchristian pedantry and priggishness; but we, as Christian men and women, must walk through life with our ears open to hear the cry which at any moment may smite upon them and enter them, if open they be—the cry that may be expressed in many a different way, the cry that may have no words to voice its misery, but the cry which always means one thing, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Our ears must be open to hear, our mind prepared to understand, our heart enlarged to feel, our will prompt to help. The great fight for good is not an individual fight; it is a soldier's battle, where each may help his neighbour. There Jesus may be our example; there we may follow the steps of His most holy life.

¶ 'The ache of life is not knowing where to take your weariness,' says a writer in a self-revealing letter. 'Let who will receive your triumphs; to whom a man can take his heart-ache, that man walks near the Godhead!'

Immanence and Transcendence

Rom. vii. 24.—'Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'

G. K. Chesterton has, in his inimitable way, enforced the fundamental opposition between the religious ideals of Christianity and those

of Buddhism by reminding us of the contrast between the image of a Christian saint in a Gothic cathedral and the image of a Buddhist saint in a Chinese temple. 'The Buddhist saint,' he says, 'always has his eyes shut, while the Christian saint always has them very wide open. The Buddhist saint has a sleek and harmonious body, but his eyes are heavy and sealed with sleep. The medieval saint's body is wasted to its crazy bones, but his eyes are frightfully alive. The Buddhist is looking with a peculiar intentness inwards. The Christian is staring with a frantic intentness outwards.' And the reason of this contrast is a contrast in belief. For the Christian God is essentially other than himself. God's love has declared itself in giving every single life in His creation a free and separate existence. And it has done so that it might ever continue to be love, just that it might always have something to love and something which could answer it with love. But for the Buddhist God is the ultimate elusive secret of his own soul. The Christian must look out for ever with increasing admiration and surprise and love upon a creation which in all its myriad forms shares with himself in a Divinely derived but Divinely independent life. The Buddhist must for ever withdraw from every feeling of surprise or admiration or love as from so many delusions which tempt him away from God.

1. *Transcendence.* — Chesterton is insisting on this contrast between Buddhism and Christianity though he knows, as we all do, that for the Christian God is immanent as well as transcendent. He is using it in the interests of healthy religious belief among ourselves in this Western world to-day. Now we agree with Chesterton when he insists on the truth of that conception of God as transcending His world, which he claims to be peculiarly Christian. To forget it or to depress it is to lose touch with all that makes religion real. Every image which is valid for man's soul in its attitude to God testifies to its truth. We are God's soldiers, recruited in every generation to take our part in the battle which He wages against the evil in the world. We are God's servants, busied in His service throughout a world which He alone adequately knows and directs. We are God's children, roaming familiarly about His home, which, like children, we take to be still more our own, happy in His smile, shrinking before His frown, playing truant with the innocent and adventurous craft of children in the hours of sunshine, gathering about His knees for comfort in the hours of darkness and terror. Or, it may be, in another mood this world is not good enough for God's owning, and so for us, His children, it is a foreign land. Our spirits are not native here. We are pilgrims along strange and lonely roads, strange for all their familiarity, lonely for all their crowds. Again, we are ambassadors of God at a foreign court, or more frequently we are the prodigals in the far country.

Now all this imagery is true and helpful. It keeps us looking out towards God. It helps us to love the world, on whose face the smile of God is reflected as a seal and symbol of the distant radiance. It helps us, too, to fear the world. There are in it things too terrible for man to look upon and live, or at any rate to live at the level we feel to be his natural one. And, again, there are in it hints of things too lovely for him to look upon and live the life he has been accustomed to live. We need to look out and beyond all that is here or ever can be here in order to find God.

2. *Immanence.*—What are we to say about looking inward? Is all the experience of the mystics utterly false and misleading? Above all, are we to say it as Christians, seeing that mysticism has been one of the most consistent expressions of Christianity throughout its history? And the mystics, we must remember, are those who have looked almost exclusively within to find God, who have realized Him most conspicuously as the inner light. There are saints in the Christian calendar who would be represented with deep, peaceful inlooking eyes. They were men, and women too, who had ceased to look out because they had found the outward distracting, who thought they had passed beyond the symbol and had penetrated to the reality. And that reality they found within.

To vision of that one Power which guides the world
How should men find it?
Only through those doors,
Which opening inward in each separate soul
Give each man access to that soul of all

Living within each life, not to be found or known,
Till looking inward, each alone meets the unknowable and Eternal God.[1]

This experience, even if exaggerated, is not unlike the experience of the ordinary religious soul. That experience may help us to understand what serious men mean when they talk about the immanence of God. They mean that they could never have looked anywhere to find God, either without or within, if some power of God had not already had possession of them. They mean that no word of God could ever have reached their souls if there had not already been some word of God within their souls. They mean that every word of God is but the already expected and foreseen answer to a kindred word which questions incessantly and clamorously within. They mean that there could be no symbol anywhere without, if something of the reality had not been already within to recognize it as a symbol. They mean that Christ Himself would have come in vain as the fulfilment of the Divine Word, if He had not taken thought to lodge beforehand in the hearts of men as at least a word to be fulfilled.

Dwelt no power Divine within us,
How could God's Divineness win us?

But they mean something more than all this, and St Paul and St Augustine, kindred souls and kindred mystics, will help us to the fullness of their meaning. They meant that man was not free, merely in virtue of his creation, but in virtue of his redemption; that he was not free simply because God had separated him from Himself, but because He had so separated him from Himself as still to retain a foothold in that human nature, occupying which He could hope to make it a Divine nature. Freedom and redemption are but two names for one thing. And the mystic sees, because he has felt, that redemption and freedom are only possible if God is within us, that God cannot gain fuller and fuller possession of a life—and that is redemption—if He has not always had a foothold within it, that He cannot force life but must win it,—otherwise we are not free—and that to win it He must have some ally and witness within to greet the first movement of His Spirit, or rather which is itself the first movement of His Spirit. In other words, the immanentist believes that man is created in the very image of God, that somehow God commits Himself to man in coming to be man, in order that man may be able to seek and find Him.

But when we try to indicate this self-commitment of God by human images, we are bound to suggest something that we do not mean, and yet that others may quite honestly think we do mean. If we say that a seed of the Divine nature is implanted in us, the image seems to suggest a growth which under favouring circumstances will be regular and almost automatic. If we say simply that God is immanent in man, it may be made to imply that God's nature is no greater than man's grown to its height. But let us leave all these inadequate images, and just consider what is implied in the history of a Christian soul—the soul, say, of St Paul. Something from without stirs it into a kind of action which we call in the full sense spiritual. And in that kind of action the soul feels that it has for the first time come to know itself. And that knowledge always begins as the knowledge of self as evil. There arises the sense of conflict, of two principles which have joined a truceless battle. The knowledge that the superficial ordinary self in which we have hitherto contentedly lived is evil is accompanied by the blessed experience that there is another unsuspected self which will never again take that ordinary self for granted, which must make war upon it till the latest day. And the fiercer the battle grows, the longer it is sustained, the more conscious does the soul become that that higher life has the right to its sole possession. And yet at the same time the more conscious, too, does it become of the terrible and tyrannous power of the lower life. It swings between the agonized cry of helplessness, 'Who will deliver me from the body of this death?' and the calm assurance of the confession, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' It has attained God, and yet, when it has attained God as fully as it can, God is still far beyond it. God is the soul's destiny, the term of its peace and attainment, only because He is from the beginning of beginnings the principle out of which it struggles to attain. In short, God would not be transcendent for us if He were not immanent in us. It is because He is within that we look out towards Him for ever and see.

[1] Alfred Noyes.

Moral Disabilities

Rom. viii. 1.—'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.'

One has sometimes an uneasy sense of logical incoherence at this point in the Epistle, as though the argument flagged, and this verse were really a dislocation from an earlier chapter. It appears to deal with deliverance from the penalty of sin. But when we come to look at the setting in which the verse occurs we find that St Paul was not dealing here with any question connected with the punishment of sin.

1. St Paul began the Epistle by arguing that the heathen who have a faint acquaintance with God have also, therefore, some dim knowledge of sin. They are able to discern between right and wrong, and yet in spite of this they wilfully go on sinning. But further, those who have had a fuller revelation given to them in the Word of God are nevertheless guilty of sinning even against light. So he argues that all men everywhere have placed themselves under a legal penalty by the fact that they have voluntarily broken God's law. It is no mere question of hereditary liability, but one also of their own acts, which are confessedly contrary to God's will.

But here the gospel comes in; Christ became flesh, and died in order that the original relations between God and man might be restored; He took upon Himself men's spiritual liabilities. He paid the otherwise impossible price of redemption; He is able and willing to redeem every one, so that any man, if he will, may have a fresh start; a man in Christ is justified, that is, set legally right in the eyes of God. But although man has been redeemed he is not on that account delivered from temptation. The past may be, and has been, buried, but the present is fraught with peril. Temptation is often so remorseless that the soul is tempted to say, 'Christian or no Christian, a man cannot help sinning, because every one around him does it.'

It is perfectly obvious that this is an unsatisfactory position for a Christian. Temptation there is; but no man should be willing to go on suffering defeat. If a man who trusted Christ for redemption is now going to trust to himself for deliverance, it will not be long before he finds himself in serious trouble. And so we have in the seventh chapter that groan of the sin-bound soul which each of us must at some time have uttered. And a few sentences later occurs this verse, 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.' But surely the bitterness of his complaint is not lack of forgiveness; the trouble is that he wants freedom. He wants to know not merely that his sin may be purged, but that he may be kept from falling into it again.

Now, one of the many debts which we owe to the modern discoveries of those who have been deciphering for us the Greek papyri is this, that the word (*katakrima*), rendered 'condemnation,' has a different sense from what we have imagined. The word in the Greek is not only a criminal, but often a civil legal term. It refers to land on which there is a legal embarrassment, a ground-rent, or possibly a mortgage—the dead hand of the past pressing upon the tenure of the present. The estate must be guaranteed free from that. 'There is therefore now no disability,' says the lawyer, when he makes the conveyance and passes over the estate. And in this light we can see that is precisely what the Apostle is demanding here. The man is crying out under the pressure of the dead hand of the past, which is cramping and controlling his present. 'Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' And here comes the answer: 'Are you in Christ Jesus? there is therefore now no disability.' Where is it made efficacious? 'In Christ Jesus,' the sphere where all spiritual effectiveness is experienced.

2. God's power, given through the Holy Spirit, is brought into effective application to human needs in this eighth chapter, and because of Him we are able to say, 'there is now no disability.' There is a homely word which we have borrowed from the currency of the athletic world, which comes nearest to expressing St Paul's thought here—the word 'handicap.' We speak of men who are poor, or lame, or dull as starting life with a handicap. And the soul is apt to feel that it is handicapped by its past, until the Divine provision of the indwelling Spirit is appropriated as well as apprehended. So this eighth chapter takes the five great handicaps which we all dread in our everyday life, and then shows us their antidote in Him whom we call the Comforter. What, then, are these

handicaps of life, the mortgages on our spiritual estate?

(1) The first is the disability of *the perverted desire.* It is noted in the fifth and sixth verses, where we are told of the 'mind of the flesh.' What tragedies in experience are spelled for us in the words—the mind of the flesh with all its earthly ambitions, its sordid ideals, and its unclean longings. But St Paul shows how the Spirit of God takes that mind of the flesh and subdues and transforms it, so that, while we still do what we wish, we now wish to do the right thing. It is an anticipation of that Paradise of which Dante wrote that there

> The King makes His will our will,
> And His will is our peace.

When the handicapped man wins what a shout of triumph goes up from the fields of earth. Is there less exultation in the courts of heaven?

(2) The Apostle next deals with the disability of *the unguarded heart.* There is always peril in leaving the human heart tenantless and without a caretaker. So in the ninth and eleventh verses we have St Paul's description of the great Caretaker, who is to keep watch and ward of our hearts. He says that the Holy Spirit of God is willing to come not simply as a visitor, but as a permanent indweller in our hearts. He brings not only security, but stimulus and energy in His train. Our powers have been dormant: He awakens them. They have seemed to be dead: He works a resurrection. St Paul uses the daring illustration of the dead Jesus. As the still form was raised from a hopeless lifelessness into a living power, and to-day He reigns at the right hand of God in glory, so the life-giving Spirit of God who wrought it is able to take the deadness within a man, and to quicken it into vitality, so that the man shall live a resurrection life of power. The Spirit is the heritage, as Paul reminds us, of every child of God. But it does not follow that because we have an inheritance we have therefore appropriated it; and there are many Christians who have a legal right to the Spirit of God as 'caretaker' in their hearts, who have never appropriated and entered into the experience of that Divine power which is at their disposal.

¶ One of the greatest Indian Christians, Principal Rudra, underwent a deep conversion of spirit when he got hold of the words 'I am the resurrection and the life.' And well he might, for these two words hold within them two things that meet two of our greatest needs: 'I am the resurrection'—the coming of new life to defeated, dull spirits; and 'I am the life'—the power that sustains the new life continually after finding that resurrection. Life and life sustained! This presages victory.[1]

(3) He comes next to the disability of *the rebellious will.* We all know how bitter and how terrible that can be. How often, when we have hoped and prayed to do the thing that was right, the will has refused to endorse our petitions. The last disability brought us face to face with lack of life; here we are confronted with too much of it, the vitality of a lively will that insists on asserting itself. And St Paul states that the Spirit of God is willing to conduct a perpetual and continuous execution of that evil principle which distorts the will. He says, 'If ye by the Spirit of God do lead unto death the deeds of the flesh, ye shall live.' One of the greatest discoveries of surgical science has been the antiseptic treatment, by which wounds which were in danger of festering have been kept wholesome and clean, through the fact that the sterilizer has been vigilant and effective. Here is God's great Sterilizer, prepared to deal with man's rebellious will, and keep it in a wholesome condition moment by moment as temptation arises.

(4) The fourth disability is that of *a fearful heart.* There can be no question that the 'roaring lion' is able to terrify many Christians from entering into the Palace Beautiful which is their rightful heritage. Bunyan showed us that the lion is chained. St Paul points out that we delude ourselves into fancying that we are really the chained folk: we have 'a spirit of bondage unto fear.' But the Spirit bears witness that we are children of God, and cheers our spirit into recognizing the fact. As verse fifteen says, we have not received the slave-spirit to terrorize us; we have received the son-spirit which recognizes that, both on the law-side and the love-side, the question is settled, so that we may press into every chamber of Divine privilege and possession with the reverent, yet tenderly familiar, 'Abba,' of the child that is confident of its welcome.

¶ A Welsh evangelist of the eighteenth century tells that when the fire of the love of

[1] E. Stanley Jones, *Christ and Human Suffering*, 200.

God first fell upon him, he cried: 'Abba, Father! Abba, Father!' 'I could not help calling God my Father. I knew that I was His child, and that He loved me and heard me.'[1]

(5) Lastly, we have the handicap of *a puzzled mind*. There is the ignorance of what we should say—what we should ask for in prayer. So here in the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth verses we are shown that the same Spirit makes intercession for us, and tells us how to speak and how to pray according to the mind of God.

The conclusion, then, is that there is no handicap, no legal embarrassment that need hold us back, and we ask ourselves how we may appropriate this Divine gift? The simplest of all directions has been given by our Lord in regard to it, for He has told us that, as the most natural parental instinct is to satisfy the need of a hungry child, so our Heavenly Father *gives* the Spirit to them that '*ask him*.' Two words only, and yet they are the key to glory and power.

¶ After the great Durbar, at the time of the coronation of King Edward VII, the Maharajah of Nabha did a beautiful action. In common with the other princes who attended that ceremony, he had a plot of land outside Delhi allotted to him for his encampment. When he went away he paid a large sum of money into the local treasury in order that the particular plot of land might be exempt from taxation in perpetuity. 'For,' said he, 'I the King have rested here; therefore the land shall be free from burdens for ever.' And to-day those near Delhi who have no money may go, without money and without price, and may claim their place on a position which another has paid for, and may enjoy without embarrassment the gift which was made to them by another's bounty.

The Christian Law of Liberty

Rom. viii. 2.—'For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.'

This is a statement of experience. It is the description of a victory which Christ had won. It brings before us the fact that Christian living means the victory over sin. Before his conversion St Paul's life was dominated by sin. He had fought it, but in vain. It was as if he had spent his efforts, like the king in the ancient fable, rolling a boulder up a slope only to find that it rolled back again. But now another power had come into control. The spirit of life in Christ Jesus had come to possess him, and he was set free from the power of sin. These two forces are in conflict in all of us.

Unless Paul's life was such as ours might be, if all this slavery and freedom that he tells about was special and exceptional in himself, all our best interest in Paul evaporates. If he is a curiosity and not a type why should we preach about him? But he is a type. This experience of his is the possible experience of everybody, has been the actual experience of thousands. It has in it the deepest secret of human life. Let us see if we can find it out and understand it.

1. It teaches that only a law can really set man free from a law. Only a better law can deliver a man out of the power of a worse law. A law is simply a power in orderly and continuous action.

You do not free the stream from the great law which is forcing it down to the sea by merely throwing a dam across it which only hinders and chafes it. By and by the water that you tried to fence away breaks through, and, all the more violently because you tried to stop it, the stream is tumbling and foaming along the old channel. You must make a new channel. You must slope the ground with deeper declivity another way. You must bring a new power as orderly and as continuous as the old; in other words, you must make a new law before your stream is really free from the old law and runs a new way as freely as it ran the old.

Thus, only a new law can give a man freedom from an old law. And yet every day we see men ignoring this truth. Every day we see men trying to get loose from the old despotic laws of their life, not by the establishment of any new law, but by some one spasmodic struggle which is a mere log thrown across the stream, and has no real power over the current.

Nothing less radical, less persuasive, less continuous than the power that enslaves can be the power to free. No mere shock of galvanic movement can stop the law of death that is working in the moral nature. What can stop death? What can go underneath the tyranny and universality of decay and undermine and

[1] W. M. Macgregor.

conquer it? Nothing but that which is the old and triumphant enemy of death everywhere! Nothing but the spirit of life! In every growing tree, in every constantly decaying, constantly renewing body, in every strange vitality of nations and of institutions, everywhere there is the struggle of the spirit of life with death. It is a positive, strong power everywhere grappling with the monster that tries and sometimes seems to rule the world. And if there be any consistent power of goodness able to cope with and conquer the ever-present power of wickedness—that in the moral world will be what this mysterious vitality is in the world of physical things, the law of the spirit of life which can set men free from the law of death.

2. St Paul goes on to tell us where he found this 'law of the spirit of life.' 'The law of the spirit of life in Jesus Christ,' he says, 'has set me free.' It was in the example and the redemption of Jesus Christ that Paul found the power which alone was able to meet and master this force of moral degradation and deterioration which he saw in the world and which he felt in himself. He had felt in himself, and he was looking to see in the world, the power of a personal Christ, everywhere believed in, everywhere loved, become the power of a new freedom.

The Spirit of life *in Christ*. And it is to be noted in Paul's Epistles that he uses as equivalent expressions 'the Spirit,' the 'Spirit of God,' and the 'Spirit of Christ.' He goes even further, for, in the mode of Paul's speech, the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ are the same as the very person of Christ Himself. Many have sought to construct a doctrine of the Holy Spirit from these writings, and it is quite possible to do so, but the significance of his utterances is due to the fact that he was thinking not of theology, but of Christian experience.

The spirit of life in Christ Jesus is the same force which energized the personality of Jesus, and which begins to energize the believer in Christ when he is united to Him. Paul drew no distinction between what he owed to the Spirit and what he owed to Christ, and we keep nearest the mind of Paul when we regard them as one indissoluble experience. The gift of God is the spirit of life, and that is *in* Christ Jesus.

No other power than the power of the indwelling Spirit of Life can set one free from moral degradation; and every spiritually taught Christian knows that as well as the Apostle. Education will not do it, culture will not do it, filling the soul with noble ideals will not do it, self-torturing of the body will not do it, no amount of conventional religious practices will do it, the best resolutions will not do it, the most solemnly taken vows will not do it; we need a Divine power in us to do it, we need the 'Spirit of life in Christ.'

¶ We sometimes see old leaves on the tree all the winter through, clinging with a strange tenacity to the boughs. The fiercest storms do not loosen them, nor do the keenest frosts. But when spring comes round, and the sap begins to rise, the old, unsightly leaves do not need to be torn off, they drop off themselves, they are pushed off by the new power flowing through every branch: the new life displaces the old.

¶ At the end of 1933, an old colleague in municipal life and an honoured friend, one who is known to-day the world over, George Bernard Shaw, wrote to me: 'Read *A Man's Life*, by Jack Lawson, Labour M.P. The Dean of Worcester made me read it. You must start, however, with a knowledge of what the underground world was before Methodism came and saved it. In those days the men were demons and the women savages . . . but they were honest, upright demons and savages, with solid characters; and it was Methodism that did that for them. I very much doubt whether Shavianism would have been equally successful.' Even Bernard Shaw himself wonders whether his doctrines could have wrought what Methodism has accomplished, and in his letter on the same theme he speaks of 'the Grace of God.'[1]

3. What the law of the Spirit of life in Christ is able to do.

(1) *It sets men free.*—The gospel of the Spirit is a gospel of deliverance, for 'where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty'; and it is because our fathers believed this that they went out into the highways and byways, and all the places where wicked and sin-bound men and women were found, and preached the gospel of deliverance, immediate and complete. If we have the law of the Spirit of life we can go to the the most sin-bound and dehumanized

[1] C. Ensor Walters.

specimens of humanity and say, Here I stand; while we speak you can be free, there is nobody but the Spirit of Christ that can save you.

¶ Dr Jowett undertook to write a foreword to the report of the Water Street Mission in New York, a mission that abounds in converted drunkards. Drunkards of all kinds and stages and degrees of the drink habit come into that place and are wonderfully set free. Before he did it he saw two of the greatest doctors in America, who were nerve specialists, and he asked: Have you any cure for drunkenness?' And both said: 'In medical science there is no cure; there are things that restrain and that counteract, but when you speak of cure —there is no cure.' And then he went down to Water Street and heard the testimonies of men who were set free, and having gained that experience have never again gone back.

That victory is what fills the New Testament with hope. It is the theme of our great hymns. The Christian song is a song of deliverance. One of our greatest needs is to recover this truth. We take sin in ourselves for granted, while we condemn it in others. Some kinds of sin are often regarded as permissible and inevitable, even in a Christian man. We may abhor the grosser forms of sin; but we allow ourselves to be overcome by pride or animosity or jealousy, or those resentments against one another that break fellowship in many a home and many a Church.

The message of victory is very clear. 'He that is born of God doth not commit sin. The first effect of the new life is deliverance from these things. The victory is not only possible; it is the first step into a new life. And the key to the fullness of life in Christ for us can be found in facing honestly definite sins in His light, and refusing to let ourselves off. The secret of new life is not merely right ideas. These are important. But the real road lies in facing what is definitely wrong in our lives. We need not fear to be honest with ourselves, however staggering be the revelation of the light. For the light of Christ is love. He has come to cleanse us from *all* iniquities. The deliverance is ours in Him. He has won it for us. We have only to see our need of it and then to claim it. We cannot possess it in any other way than as a gift.

(2) *It makes possible a triumphal life of goodness*, sanctifying humanity, vitalizing personality, making man a very temple of the living God, and becoming incarnate as truly in His sanctified human nature as He was sanctified in Jesus Christ.

Formerly to be religious had meant to Paul the attempt to conform to an external standard of goodness; now it meant yielding to the influence of an inward force conforming him to the image of Christ. It meant to him no longer the laborious effort to comply with the commands of a transcendent God outside of him, but to yield to the working of God immanent in him by the spirit of life in Christ.

Persons and things are not made holy by being set apart, but the spirit of life in Christ Jesus enters into every sphere of life to consecrate it. It means the obliteration of the distinction between secular and sacred. Life cannot and must not be bisected in that way. Sunday and Saturday, the Church and the world, all our artificial distinctions, based on a fictitious idea of separation, dissolve in Paul's doctrine of the complete sanctification of the personality and life of the Christian, the man who is one with the risen Christ. Holiness in the thought of Paul is therefore no mere dogma, but an experience of power working through love in the heart of the man who is united to Christ. It is an experience of power directed from above, and it appears in its outward manifestation as intellectual force, as wisdom which is from above, and as 'the expulsive power of a new affection.'

(3) *It brings assurance of immortality.*— There is one point that must not be overlooked. Not only does the thought of our being one with Christ in spirit settle for Paul the problems of holiness, sanctification, separation from the world, the significance of the Body of Christ, but there is an aspect of it under which it seems to have brought him the assurance of Immortality. For man and Nature the present is a time of expectancy, of throbbing hope. The whole creation is travailing like a mother looking forward to the moment of deliverance. Christians, like creation, are prisoners of hope, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. Now the adoption which is the pledge of redemption is the work of the Spirit, which beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God. The ultimate evidence of immortality to a believer in Christ, therefore, is the Spirit within him, assuring him of

an infinite future in which what he now enjoys as first-fruits and earnest, shall be his in full fruition. No man can have logical proof of immortality any more than he can have logical proof of the Being of God. The assurance of God is the Deity within, and the assurance of immortality is the throb of life eternal within, the outcome of the truth expressed in that most pregnant phrase of the Apostle, 'Christ in you the hope of glory.'

¶ 'Most firmly do I believe,' writes Dean Inge, 'that this faith in immortality, though formless and impalpable as the air we breathe, and incapable of definite presentation except under inadequate and self-contradictory symbols, is nevertheless enthroned in the centre of our being, and that those who have steadily set their affections on things above, and lived the risen life even on earth, receive in themselves an assurance which robs death of its sting, and is an earnest of a final victory over the grave.'

The Lost Sense of Sin

Rom. viii. 3.—'For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, condemned sin in the flesh' (R.V.).

One of the marked features of the religious life of our time is a lost sense of sin. Never was Christ held in higher regard. He is the dominant personality of the civilized world. To His character all men accord an adoring reverence. His word is the final authority in the spiritual life. Yet that sense of sin which so afflicted and tormented His spirit, that realization of sin as a heinous wrong to God, a revolt against His will, and the burden of His heart, has greatly passed away.

In this passage the Apostle has set down for us the source and secret of the sense of sin. That source and secret, he says, is God's condemnation. And that condemnation is threefold. It is, first, the condemnation by a law: 'I had not known sin but by the law.' It is, second, condemnation by a life: 'What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh,' God has done by 'sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.' It is, third, condemnation by a cross: 'God sending his own Son, as an offering for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.'

1. *Condemnation by a Law.*—We all realize the wide range and varied purposes of a law. A law condenses a moral truth into an imperative obligation. It is a barrier against wrongdoing, and a guide into the path of obedience. It is a source of inspiration and a constant call to a more loyal fulfilment of the tasks of life. A law is also a means of education. It imprints moral truths upon the mind, and it brings them in upon the conscience. But here we cross the threshold into the most searching office of a law. That is its power of moral condemnation and spiritual conviction. 'I had not known sin but by the law.' Whenever a law stands out in clear statement, so that some moral truth is seen, then some contradicting wrong also stands out in its unmasked baseness. A man requires only to see a moral standard embodied in some just law, whether it be stated in a clause on a statute book, or heard in some appeal on a speaker's lips, or attested by some event marked by the conscience, to find his life condemned and a sense of sin tormenting him.

To take a simple instance. Look at it in connection with our daily business life. Here is a man who has made his living in a trade which wrings its profits out of the degradation of the people. His business and its customs are followed by multitudes. There are keen brains who offer a strong and subtle defence. But he comes to the hour when a higher law of responsibility, and a nobler conception of what a man's hand should find to do dawn upon him. In the stillness of an anguished mind he finds himself condemned by this higher law, and he bows his head in a new sense of sin.

This is the condemnation which Paul has disclosed in his own experience. Paul is the rich young ruler of the years after Christ. He would have stood in his young Pharisaic days and declared, 'All these things have I kept from my youth up.' But the moral law was suddenly deepened. It was given an inward and spiritual reach and grasp. Its holiness searched into the depths of Paul's spirit. He tells us he had almost run the gauntlet of God's moral law. But he came to its tenth and last commandment, the most inward and spiritual and searching of all. That commandment said, 'Thou shalt not covet.' It flashed its light into the inner chambers of his

heart, and the young Pharisee's pride and ambition, his partisan zeal, and his complacent content with himself were discovered. Then he passed into a new sense of sin. 'I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.' He was condemned by the law.

How do we stand toward this condemnation? There may be some who think that they can sit unmoved because they are untouched by any commandment. But when a man finds his thoughts and ambitions and habits set out not by some coarse fingered statute, but set in the light of that law which is only God's countenance in its infinite holiness, these complacences wither.

2. *Condemnation by a Life.*—But the law, as Paul tells us, does not always produce conviction. It is, he says, 'weak through the flesh.' That is to say, our nature with its bias to sin, our consciences corrupted by past disobedience, and our love for darkness rather than light, blunt the condemnation of the law. There are hardened hearts which no pitiful sight can move to compassion. There are coarse minds which no tender emotion ever refines. There are mean men whom no generous appeal can touch. So, in this business of the soul, there are men and women in whom 'the power of the flesh'—of their sinful nature—is so potent that the law of God is foiled. It has been the great souls of humanity, Buddha and Socrates and Plato, and Peter and John and Paul, and Augustine and Bernard and Luther, with Bunyan and Wesley and Brainerd and Chalmers and M'Cheyne, and all that great succession who hungered and thirsted after righteousness—it has been these who were condemned by the law. 'But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,' when the law was weak through the flesh, has sent His Son 'in the likeness of sinful flesh,' that men who have defied the condemnation of the law might be held by the condemnation of the life.

We are on simple ground when we speak of condemnation by a life. Every one of us has known it. We never read the record of any self-controlled and self-reverencing life without feeling the prick of shame. We never come into close touch with a life of unfaltering courage, meek endurance of wrong, and patient sacrifice, without being reproved. There is no condemnation so swift as the silent condemnation of goodness.

But there is only one life which passes the final condemnation on ours. That is the life of God's own Son. Every other life fails in some feature or in some grace. Every man must take his place on his knees with his fellow, and cry with the penitent, 'I have sinned.' But this life of Jesus Christ in the flesh, with its unspotted holiness, its meekness and gentleness and patience, its radiant peace in the midst of scorn and its perfect trust in God in the darkest hour, condemns us all.

¶ 'It is,' says Alexander Whyte, 'the sight of Jesus Christ that does it. It is when I take my own heart with its self-love and self-seeking, and envy and grudging (and uncleanness), and lay it alongside the holy heart of my Lord. Then I abhor myself, and repent in sackcloth and ashes. Then I cry out to God in the words of the Fifty-first Psalm: Have mercy upon me, O God.'

3. *Conviction by a Cross.*—It is a marvel that with the light of this Life shining so clearly to-day we are not all ashamed and troubled in spirit. We may well be amazed at our own indifference. 'But God, who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved us,' when we baffled His condemnation by the life, sought that condemnation by the Cross. He made His Son 'an offering for sin.'

This power of the condemning Cross has been displayed in the case of the first sinner who was bowed down under it. It is told us in the story of the penitent thief. He was a man who knew the law. He had been trained in it from his childhood. Its commandments had been often upon his lips. He could cry, as God's statutes rose in his memory, 'We receive the due reward of our deeds.' But he had gone down the course of his evil life without being condemned by the law. He was a man who knew the life of Christ. As Jesus went up and down through the land, as He taught in the synagogues and by the lake, and in the Temple courts, and as He dealt so tenderly with the outcast and the sinner, the story of that life of holiness reached this rebel's ear. He could bear his testimony, 'This man hath done nothing amiss.' Yet he had continued in his career of crime without being condemned by the life. But now, as he looked on Jesus through those three hours of

His dying, as he marked His meekness and gentleness and considerateness, as he heard Him pray, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,' he saw, with a new insight, into the secret of that unresisting sacrifice, and he leaned out toward Jesus, making the first confession, and becoming the first witness to the power of the Cross.

This experience should not be strange to us. We find it potent in our common lives. No man has ever realized that some other has suffered for him without being brought at least to the threshold of repentance. No man has ever had the truth brought in upon his conscience that his sin is being borne in the weakness and pain and anguish of another, or that his wrongdoing has smitten some other to the death, without coming to an hour of shame.

¶ When Father Dolling was in Portsmouth he visited often from bed to bed in the hospital. One day a sailor, whom he had been visiting for some time and who was clearly not going to recover, asked him to look in his locker and to take out a brown paper parcel that he would find in it. It was, the sailor said, something he wished to give to Father Dolling. When the parcel was opened it was found to contain an ordinary check shirt. The story connected with it was this. The sailor had been 'the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.' When the lad was about twenty he came home one night, three parts drunk, and told his mother he had joined the Navy. When she burst out crying he swore at her and went to bed. But when he woke the next morning he found she had sat up all night making him a shirt so that he should have a decent one to go away in. 'If you look, sir,' he said, 'you will see little dark marks all along the seams where she pricked her fingers because she was crying and could not see properly.' And the sailor went on to say how he had never worn the shirt, but had kept it through all his voyages, and looked at it in times of temptation, and found help from it. His mother he never saw again, for she was dead when he returned from his first voyage. And so, when he was dying, he gave the shirt to Father Dolling, saying that it might help him to speak to other sailors.[1]

Let every man bring his sin into the light of the Cross. There he will be taught more truths than one. He will see not only God's moral anger and its fiat against iniquity. He will also see God's infinite love, and he will find that He redeems in His pity. There is only one thing for the man who has been humbled under the condemnation of the Cross, and that is to cast himself on that mercy which has turned human sin into the mightiest instrument of grace. Then he will take up his canticle, 'There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.'

[1] Peter Green, *This Our Pilgrimage*, 93.

On Being Spiritually-Minded

Rom. viii. 6.—'To be spiritually minded is life and peace.'

The text implies the existence of two sources from which our lives may be influenced—the one spiritual, the other material. One may mind, think about, obey the motives addressed to him from either source. His energies may flow outward with a spiritual or a worldly bias. In this regard the soul may be likened to a bird. The bird may move through the air or along the ground. If it does the former it may fly many miles in a few minutes. If it does the latter it may take many minutes in which to walk a mile. So with the soul. One's energies may glorify themselves as stimulated by the aspirations inspired from on high, or they may glut themselves as tempted by the appetites incited from below.

'To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.' Or, as the marginal reference has it—'the minding of the flesh is death; but the minding of the Spirit is life and peace.' Carnally-minded, we will *mind* the things of the flesh: spiritually-minded, we will *mind* the things of the Spirit.

Now, for all that we hear to-day of class-distinctions, there is only one distinction that really matters. There are the materialists and the idealists, or, as St Paul calls them, the carnally-minded and the spiritually-minded. In the long run that is the only real difference between us. We all belong to the one class or the other. Life for us means either that we want to live 'on the top floor,' or that we are satisfied to live in the cellar.

But the word 'spiritually-minded' needs re-definition in our time. Ideas have got mixed up with it which are not of its essence. The

thing itself is vital and supreme, but as it has often been expressed it lacks reality, and there is no beauty in it that we should desire it. All sorts of fads and '-isms' and eccentricities have, at some time or other, masqueraded as very special evidences of spirituality.

It is a not uncommon thing among religious people to judge spirituality by a few forms, by the doing of certain specific things; for example, if a man were known to make a daily practice of reading the Bible, if he were frequently heard using the language of piety, frequently in attendance at Church services, and active in mission work, many would adjudge him a very spiritual man. Well, he might be. It is true that genuine spirituality is often expressed in those forms; the soul-energies of many of the best men of the world have gone out in that direction: they have read the Bible because it helped them to realize God's presence in their life; they have attended Church services because it brought them a new baptism of power, and they have worked at the mission from a pure desire to help others to the highest good.

Yet these things are not unfailing marks of spiritual life. Hard, selfish men, uncharitable in temper, and very materialized in ambition can do them every one, and have often been so engaged. These things in themselves are not spiritual life; they may be, or they may not be, expressions of it.

¶ The effect of such a system is well illustrated, though in a highly coloured form, by Ian Maclaren, in his exquisite pen sketches in his *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush*. There was Milton, a farmer who in course of time settled in the quiet village of Drumtochty. Pluming himself on certain texts bearing on faith as opposed to works, he scoffed at morality preaching; and finding in the one village church the staple of the discourses was the Sermon on the Mount, and not, as he thought, the gospel, and in the other church the advantage was emphasized of keeping an open mind for fresh views on the dealings of God with the sons of men, he 'became a separatist, and edified himself and his household in his kitchen.' Drumsheugh may not have been just in his estimate when he said, 'I never heard sae muckle aboot conscience and never saw so little o't in this parish,' but we all, unfortunately, know cases ourselves where people plume themselves on mere belief in the doctrine of atonement, and do not attend to the subsequent surrender of the soul.

But let us see what the phrase ought to mean.

1. *Spiritual living is a kind of living that is possible for everybody.* There is no temperament that is more naturally spiritual than any other. The gloomy, sad, inward-looking soul is no nearer to it, of necessity, than the robust, hearty outward-looking person, with a laugh as cheerful as the song of birds. Spiritual living is as possible for the Esau type, if he desires it, as for the Jacob type, for the outdoor man as for the student. For it implies neither a special calling nor a special type of mind.

¶ There is no lawful calling that doth absolutely exclude this grace of being spiritually-minded in them that are engaged in it, nor any that doth include it. Men may be in the meanest of lawful callings and be so, and men may be in the best and highest and not be so.[1]

What *is* spiritual-mindedness? It is just awareness of God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a way of looking at life with God at the back of it all. Spiritual-mindedness no more belongs of right to any special temperament than the love of wife or children does. If it is Christ's gospel of good news we are declaring, therefore, we must be careful to make it quite clear that spiritual living is possible for everybody.

2. *Spiritual living is a kind of living that is possible everywhere.*

(1) A spiritual man is one who sees God *in the world*. We do not mean by this simply one who believes there is a God who made and rules the world. There is nothing spiritual in believing that. He that would see God must of course believe that He is. But many believe this and still have no vision of God. Their belief is merely a theory of the universe or of their own origin. There is such a thing, however, as seeing God in His works, in the living world—the Divine One Himself, present, immanent and active, pervading the visible world in His omnipresence, and yet transcending the world, that Being whom Wordsworth had in mind:

> A presence that disturbs me with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime

[1] John Owen.

Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.

This is neither pantheism nor beautiful poetry simply, but rather the spiritualization of the created world — that vision which comes to him who makes the living universe the Divine dwelling-place and discovers the eternal in the temporal, to whom every leaf throbs with the life of God, in whom all things consist. Is not this the peculiar inspiration of the Jewish prophets and psalmists? Nature is instinct with emotion and with God. God decks Himself with light as with a garment; He spreads out the heavens as a curtain; He makes the clouds His chariot.

To many the visible creation, with its order, its laws, its beauty, brings no thought of the Being who inhabits it. To others, whose souls are more sensitive to the spiritual side of things, Nature is a mirror; material things shadow forth the immaterial, and the living universe is, as Frederick Robertson has said, 'the garment in which the Living God clothes His mysterious loveliness.'

¶ I remember, last summer, floating in a canoe on a little lake in the woods of Maine. It was the hour when the twilight was melting almost imperceptibly into the dark. The blue sky changed into an intense luminous green from the sun's reflected rays as it sank below the horizon, and then, as one searched the sky through the ebbing twilight, the first faint stars appeared. All round the margin of the lake there was silence, and on the mirror of its waters no sound except the swift dripping from the lifted paddles. Floating there before that pageant of the withdrawing day, and under the spell of the majestic coming on of night, I was acutely sensitive to every element of its colour and every line and contour of the silhouetted hills. Their physical facts were keen in my awareness, but that was not all. In the instants when I saw most, I felt most surely a greater Something which escaped me. There beyond those quiet hills and in that quivering colour of the sky, it was as though some vast secret trembled for expression. It was not simply that here was a beauty which the eyes could see. Here was a mystic meaning which the spirit in me reached out to grasp and felt and almost apprehended, though it could not utter. I knew that in the deep poetry of that mystical experience *God*, who, the old naïve chronicler said, walked in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the day, was moving invisibly this night among the hills.[1]

In an age of great scientific achievements, when so much of the genius of the world is being turned to the application of natural forces to practical life, when the temptation is so strong with us all to look upon Nature as the mere tool of man, is it not important to remember this higher truth—that this wondrous world is the veritable dwelling-place of our God?

(2) A spiritual man is one who sees God *in his fellow-men*. It is not enough to see Him in Nature. He dwells peculiarly in man, and we are spiritual in proportion as we see the spiritual in other men, in the degree of our reverence for man as a spiritual being. To wrong man is to wrong God. To help a brother-man is to do the highest service to God. And it is just this discovery of the sacredness of man that marks the upward growth of the soul into the Divine life. What else but this vision of God in man ever inspires the highest forms of self-sacrifice or explains the conduct of the noblest men in their noblest hours? What else but this vision of God in man—the Divine and sacred spark in the worst of men—brought our Lord Himself to earth, inspired His lowly ministry, and led Him to Calvary? Gethsemane and the Cross are the estimate not only of man's sin but of his worth.

This gospel of love is the Divine measure of the preciousness of man. It is this vision, caught from our Lord Jesus Christ, that kindles and keeps alive missionary enthusiasm—not simply the command of Christ to go into all the world, but the vision of Christ, seeing Him, seeing what He saw and believing what He believed. It is this that drives the Christian disciple out of ease and self-indulgence into a life of glorious service and redemption amongst the poor, the unfortunate, the depraved, and the lost.

¶ Griffith John, the great Chinese missionary, in an address he gave at the Jubilee Meetings of the Congregational Union at Manchester, thrilled a great audience which filled the Free Trade Hall, by declaring that he would think it worth while to labour for æons and æons if God made him the means of saving one Chinese soul.

(3) The spiritual man is one who sees God

[1] W. R. Bowie, *On Being Alive*, 223.

in the whole of life. There is a notion abroad, largely inherited from the past, that spirituality, if it is genuine, is inconsistent with resolute and determined purpose, with strenuous activity in behalf of good causes, and with the development of positive, aggressive character.

Beyond any question there is a service of highest value to be rendered to one's own soul by a quiet withdrawal, at stated or suitable times, from the noise and whirl of the busy distracting world into the sacred privacy of undisturbed thought and the blessed fellowship of our Lord. But, as everybody knows, there is a spirituality, or what passes for spirituality, which reaches just this handfolded and reposeful stage and there stops. Sometimes it seems conscious of its shortcomings and weaknesses, and sometimes it is conceited and disdainful; but it is always wanting in grit. Its voice is feeble. It feels that this is a dreadful world to live in; at the same time it is half offended, if not horrified, at the suggestion of mending it by going down into the rough and tumble of actual everyday life.

Monks in their cloisters and nuns in their seclusion are not adequate, much less ideal, interpreters of spirituality. Neither do we have a perfect spirituality if we leave out what monks and nuns of the genuine sort are supposed to find in their retirement from the world. Like them we must pause and think and pray. We may refresh our souls and enjoy to the full such visions as are granted when up in the mount of rare experiences; but we are not to forget the crying needs and the imperative duties there are down on the plains and in the valleys where men are wrestling with infirmities which hamper and temptations which destroy.

¶ In his life of Cromwell, Morley says: 'Firm in his belief in direct communion with God, a sovereign power unseen; hearkening for the divine voice, his steps guided by the divine hand, yet he moved full in the world and in the life of the world.'

Whilst Thou didst on earth appear
Servant to Thy servants here,
Mindful of Thy place above,
All Thy life was prayer and love.
Such our whole employment be,
Works of faith and charity;
Works of love on men bestowed
Secret intercourse with God.

Vessels, instruments of grace,
Pass we thus our happy days
'Twixt the mount and multitude,
Doing or receiving good,
Glad to pray and labour on
Till our earthly course is done.

3. In its highest conception, *spiritual living is fellowship with God*, fellowship properly defined as inward communion with God and outward fidelity to His requirements. It is through that sense of fellowship that the mind of the spirit is above all realized. And to him to whom it has been opened, even though but for a brief season, existence can never lose the sense of its infinity. It may be haunted by problems which it cannot solve, but it knows there is a solution in the thought which folds it round. It is the supreme honour and attainment of man to be one with God in feeling, thought, and purpose.

Christ was the perfect illustration of spiritual-mindedness and spiritual living. Were one to think as He thought—take the same view of truth and duty and the soul; were one to live as He lived—live a life unstained by sin, and full of all-wise sympathy and helpfulness; were one to maintain, as He did from first to last, the distinction between the seen and the unseen, the mortal and the immortal, the things which perish with the using and the things which abide evermore, nothing would be wanting to a full and complete spirituality.

4. *What are the positive results of spiritual-mindedness?*—They are life and peace—the two things we all want most. Again and again Jesus spoke of life and peace as the promises of God for His sons and daughters who really know Him. 'This is life eternal that they may know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' And the Epistles of Paul throb with this theme, that the new life of the spiritually-minded is a dynamic in the present with the promise of full fruition in eternity. This true life which is the gift of God is what we all most need. It is life lived under the rule of God and with the glow of God in the heart, a sense of harmony, a joyous spirit, an inward reinforcement—'Though the outward man is decaying, yet the inward man is renewed day by day'—and life with an outgoing force. 'To be spiritually minded is life.'

And it is peace. Not a peace which is an absence of warfare, but a peace which flows from a spiritual adjustment of the soul to God. A peace in the midst of life which is 'the possession of adequate resources,' a peace of God which is better than any security which we seek by our own planning and contrivance. A peace out of the depth of which we gain new heart for living, new courage for trial, new patience for checks and crosses, and recovery from life's cruel disasters.

¶ A new biography of Louisa Alcott, author of *Little Women*, is just out—*Invincible Louisa*. Life then was not calm and easy. In the Alcott household it was very difficult. But one gets the impression also that it was happy, fundamentally happy; serenity in the soul, serenity in the home, something profound and peaceful in themselves and in their relationships with one another and with God—a haven to come back to from the storms of life. We moderns desperately need that and a vital Christianity gives it. For whatever else a real religion has done or left undone, it has ministered to those who understood it best a profound resource of inner power, a margin of reserve around their need, so that even in a prison Paul could sing about the 'peace of God which passeth all understanding.' [1]

The Badge of Discipleship

Rom. viii. 9.—'If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.'

What is a Christian? St Paul had no doubt as to what a Christian was. He was one who had received as the gift of God the Spirit of Christ to rule his life in every part. He was not an admirer of Christ, or a student of Christ, or a preacher of Christ, though he might be any or all of those things. The Christian man essentially was one who had passed through a great experience, a crisis of the soul, in which God had given him power to overcome his sin, had breathed into him a new life, henceforth to live with the Spirit of Christ in his heart. With Paul that thought is insistent, constant, and overwhelming. The Jesus of history has a relatively small place in the thought of Paul. The perpetual theme that runs through all his teaching, like the *motif* in great music, was that these men and women to whom he had written had had the gift of the Spirit of Christ given to their hearts, the spirit of a risen, triumphant, all-powerful Lord, with whom they could not fail. Paul never wavered in this belief. It was not some idea that he had picked up as he had gone around; it was an experience of his own soul. And he appeals to the same experience in the souls of his fellow Christians. 'Ye have received of the Spirit of Christ.'

¶ A quaint old Cambridge mystic of the early seventeenth century has a parable of two rain drops which hung together, one of which was discouraged because of his smallness and ineffectiveness, but the other cheered him up by reminding him that he was a part of the great ocean. To Paul the souls of men, of Christian men, were as pools upon the margin of the sea, dried up and foul, which, when the tides of spring had swept up, were filled and made beautiful. They were in the ocean, and the ocean was in them. And for Paul the ocean was Christ filling to overflowing the lives of the men who came to find themselves in Him.

1. This reality of the transforming Spirit lies at the very root of our religion. This is the actual change which the coming of Jesus Christ has effected in the world. This is the new power which does not grow up from beneath, but comes down from above; so that men are born again, not by virtue of any motion or effort in the flesh, or in the blood, or in the will, but of God. This is the gospel. Man can live a life which is not his own, but is his own transfigured by a higher power. And this life has come into play as an actual energy at work, producing visible results. It is here, among us, as a new condition of existence. As we pass into it we enter on to a new plane. We can do things which we were powerless to do before. We can draw upon unfailing resources.

This is what St Paul portrays as the thing that is meant by being a Christian. 'Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.' No one can claim to belong to Christ who knows nothing of all this.

How everything else fades into insignificance; beside it disputes about modes of worship and

[1] H. E. Fosdick, *The Power to See it Through*, 162.

statements of belief and validity and order seem incongruous. The Church of Christ consists of those who have caught a ray of His light and in whom His Spirit dwells. They have seen what He came to show, and life and work and hope become new creations. There is literally a new heaven and a new earth. What else matters or can matter? 'If any man has not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his'; if a man has it the means by which it has come can never be invalidated.

¶ Dr Moffatt, towards the close of Ecclesiastes, sharpens a phrase, that had lain blunt and pointless, into a little glancing flash of genius. 'They put,' says the Preacher, speaking of the writings of old, 'they put the mind of one man into many a life.' Could there be a more satisfying definition of the function of literature, of that subtle wizardry whereby thoughts, called out, ah! how long ago, by some passing incident, are not dead, though their authors have for centuries been lying in forgotten graves, but are alive in our minds still, so that we find in these thoughts blown to us from another world the final and complete expression of what lies deepest in the most secret places of our souls, of those indefinable wistfulnesses, of those home-sicknesses of spirit which we too know but for which we could never have found adequate words. 'They put the mind of one man into many a life.' But even more arresting is that as an almost perfect definition of Christianity. Where will you find a better? For what is it, this wonderful faith of ours? What is it here to do? Is it not just precisely this, to put the thoughts of one wonderful Mind into many lives until we look out through Christ's eyes, feel with Christ's heart, will with Christ's will, not only speak, but think and act and live, with His very accent?

2. What, then, is the Spirit of Christ, and how shall we know it? The beautiful thing called Christlikeness, of what does it consist? Montaigne tells us that always at the end of a book he wrote a little note on the impression it had made on him. What would we set down at the close of the Gospels as a pithy summary of the main features of the wonderful Figure who meets us there?

(1) *His Sympathy.*—Christ was really hurt by others' troubles, could not stand unmoved outside of them, but had to come into the raw sore heart of them and share them. And everybody came to know that and flocked eagerly to this Man so original in His use of life, who put His own to none of the recognized ends, who gave Himself the smallest place in it, who threw it away with a queer happy zeal for anyone in difficulty or who wanted help.

¶ 'To secure our own property and our own comfort,' says a modern writer, 'to dole out our own sympathy according to rule, just so that it won't really hurt us—that's what we're all after.'

Christ was a brother to everybody. The crowd at once saw that. His brotherliness was unprecedented, even scandalous. He carried it too far, so thought the scribes. He was the friend of publicans and sinners. That was the first indictment brought in against Him. To Jesus brotherliness is of the essence of true religion. Fellowship is cardinal and indispensable. In religion worship does not come first, brotherliness comes first. It is far easier to worship than to be brotherly. 'If thou bringest thy gift to the altar and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way—first be reconciled to thy brother and then come and offer thy gift.' His disciples could never forget it. One of them, when he was an old man, wrote, 'He that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?' Brotherliness expresses itself in intercourse, communion, co-operation. It is the first note of a genuinely Christian Church.

The Spirit of Christ means to have a shoulder ready for our neighbour's burdens, a life at the disposal of those in want or need, a mind that has time for others, even for those who seem to have no claim on us, or who on their side have been thoughtless and unjust. It is not optional that we should bear our fellows' burdens, not something that the best of us can do and the rest leave alone, and be no worse for that. It is a law; and Christ lays it on all His people, expecting their obedience. And till we have learned Christ's Spirit we are none of His.

¶ Mr Galsworthy has a short story of the War. A man found himself one of the jury at the trial of a soldier for attempted suicide. The reason the prisoner gave was that he could not bear to be parted from his wife. Most people laughed

when he made the confession. But this juryman began to think. He had caught a glimpse of something that had never come to himself, a love and sympathy for another such that separation was intolerable; and as he went home he longed to go to his wife and say, 'I've learned a lot to-day, Kate; I've found out things I never thought of. Life's a wonderful thing, a thing one can't live all to oneself, a thing one shares with everybody, so that when another suffers we suffer too. It came to me that what one has doesn't matter; it's what one does, and how one sympathizes with other people. It came to me in the most extraordinary vivid way watching that poor little rat of a soldier in his trap. It's the first time I've ever felt the spirit of Christ. It's a wonderful thing, wonderful, really priceless.' [1]

(2) *His Service.*—Christ was a servant. He so glorified the word servant that His disciples could think of no higher title for themselves than 'servants.' 'He went about doing good.' That was Peter's description of Jesus' life when he held Jesus up before the Romans in the house of Cornelius in Cæsarea. Jesus loved to think of Himself as a servant. 'The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister.' At the end of His life Jesus, standing with a basin of water in one hand and a towel in the other, said, 'I have given you an example.' The disciple who wrote the Fourth Gospel has nothing to say about the Sacrament of the Bread and Wine: he fixes attention upon the Sacrament of the Basin and Towel. The Spirit of Christ is, then, the Spirit of service.

'Twas in the thrilling calmness
Within an upper room,
E'er treachery exulted
And sorrow cast a gloom,
That Love knelt down abased and low
And washed His follower's feet,
That all the world might ever know
His selflessness complete,
Simplicity of service
With love replete.

We are moving towards a period of tremendous demand on the finest and strongest in human service. Where else shall we find the inspiration for it save in this consciousness of a Divine Will and Work for ourselves? We are more and more facing the great problems of man's relationship to man within the State and of nation's relationship with nation in the world. Where is a guiding principle to be found save in the inevitable comradeship of men under the inspiration of God's Fatherhood? The need of the world is one vast cry for a fuller revealing of the Spirit of Jesus on a scale undreamed of hitherto.

(3) *His Sacrifice.*—The Spirit of Jesus is the Spirit of sacrifice. Does anyone doubt it? The fundamental principle of Christianity is self-denial. When Paul urges men to have the mind that was in Christ he portrays the self-surrender of the man Jesus, obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. Jesus was always laying down His life for others. 'If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross every day'. The Church is right in making the Cross the symbol of the Christian faith.

Thou the Cross didst bear. What bear I?
Thou the thorns didst wear. What wear I?
Thou to death didst dare. What dare I?
Thou for me dost care. What care I?

These are characteristics of the Spirit of Christ. But to use one single word to include them all, the Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of *Love.* 'God is Love,' and Jesus is the express image of His Father. The Kingdom of God is the sway of Love. If the world is full of suspicion and fear and ill-will, the Kingdom of God has not come. If the Church abound in unbrotherliness and selfishness and dissension, the Kingdom of God has not come. The sway of love must be first in the Church.

It is this Christlike type of love in Christian men which is to convince the world that Jesus Christ is from heaven. Such love is the only badge of discipleship. 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one for another.'

3. How then can we acquire the Spirit of Christ? The one conceivable way of learning Christlikeness is to live close to Jesus Christ, is to make large room for Him in our life, to dwell much in His presence, and, unconsciously, His influence will tell upon us more and more, till, little though we know it, we have grown into His ways.

[1] James Reid.

¶ Fra Angelico lived in troublous times, the beginning of the fifteenth century. Disputes and scandals and all kinds of behaviour that was inglorious prevailed around him. He might have made much money by his great gifts, but he never pined after worldly honours. He went about his blue hills, his flower-starred meadows, seeing the beauty and the colour of the earth, filling his soul with the wonder which to him was God. When he was rebuked by some for his impractical ways, for his 'star-gazing,' and the like, he had always one answer: 'One must live with Christ if one wants to do Christ's work.'[1]

When Jesus Christ chose twelve, it was not that He might send them out at once to work for others, which to a certainty would have been what we would have urged, but that they might be with Him, be a long time with Him, that His life might tell upon them day by day and hour by hour, that He might put His mind into their lives, and that increasingly they might grow up, slowly and stumblingly, yet surely, into His very thoughts and heart and character and ways.

The Leading of the Spirit

Rom. viii. 14.—'As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.'

One of the ways in which the Holy Spirit influences human life is expressed in the Bible in the word 'guidance.' We are meant to be led by the Spirit. We turn naturally to the Book of the Acts because it is the record of early Christian experience. There is no theology about the book, because it is merely a record of things that actually happened, of the way in which men proved by experiment the reality of the presence of the Holy Ghost. Therefore the Book of the Acts is full of the idea of guidance. Take the example of Philip the Evangelist. He is carrying on his missionary work and he finds himself on the way to Gaza, which is desert. A man passes in his chariot. The Spirit says unto Philip, 'Go near and join thyself to this chariot.' As we should put it, Philip feels a great impulse to run to the chariot. He climbs up into it, and has a straight talk with this distinguished person about Jesus Christ. Over and over again you have the same thing.

[1] S. H. Moore.

Take St Paul himself as in the sixteenth chapter of the Book of the Acts. He was travelling through Asia Minor, and was very anxious to preach the Word in the Province of Asia. But he says, 'the Spirit suffered us not.' He turned in another direction, and tried to start a missionary campaign in Bithynia, but the Spirit forbade him again, so he came down to the little town of Troas, having had his plans completely spoiled, as it seemed, by some strange intervention. We think now that it may have been illness that checked the Apostle's plans twice during this campaign and brought him finally to Troas. There for the first time he met Luke, who joined him, probably, as travelling physician. There he had the dream that brought him to Macedonia. So we have plans made after earnest consideration broken by what would appear to be the misfortune of ill health. Yet, looking back over the thing afterwards, Luke sees it was all part of the purpose of the Spirit. Paul was checked here and checked there and brought to Troas in order that there might be opened up the larger possibility of mission work that brought him at last to Rome.

In no respect did Paul fall heir to a fortunate combination of circumstances which buoyed him up and carried him forward almost involuntarily in his life of strenuous activity. Throughout his career he was in a state of constant struggle, striving to transcend the limitations which circumstances placed upon him, yet he maintained the struggle with unswerving purpose to the end of his life.

What kept him steadfast? There seems to be only one possible answer. All the while he counted himself to be under the guidance of an authoritative voice, the leading of the Spirit of God. His first question was, What is the will of the Spirit concerning the practical problems of my life? He did not picture the Christian life either for himself or for others as something handed down from heaven ready made. It was to be realized through daily care in ascertaining and following the dictates of the Spirit. Into this struggle to learn and to do the Divine will Paul threw himself most energetically in order that he might at last find approval before God.

The same possibility of spiritual guidance has been the privilege of Christians in every age. But as in Paul's time so to-day, such a life is not a gift to a favoured few, it is an attainment

available for the few or for the many who are willing to pay the price of attainment, who are willing to seek after and follow the leading of the Spirit.

1. Reading the context it is seen that Paul does not here mean being led or guided in the ordinary business of life. He means a quite specific kind of guidance, rather different from that which we have in the Acts. What he means is simply this: that dead formulæ become living truths when they are illuminated by the Holy Ghost. The particular dead formula to which he refers is, we believe, the formula, God the Father. That may be a mere matter of words, but it may suddenly become a living truth. It may suddenly begin to glow with life when the Holy Spirit makes it real. Just as a coloured glass window may be almost meaningless until the sun shines through it, when it glows with life and beauty, so the articles of our creed may suddenly receive a purpose and a meaning they never had before.

This new principle of life reveals itself in our consciousness as a power claiming regulative influence over our actions; leading us, in a word, into holiness.

It is obvious, then, how the text is misconceived when it is looked upon as a peculiar guidance granted by God to His faithful servants in order to insure their worldly safety, comfort, or prosperity. The good man may, by virtue of his very goodness, be saved from many of the sufferings of this life and from many of its failures. How many of the evils and trials of life are rooted in specific sins we can never know. But we must not infer that the Spirit's leading is absent when trials come—sufferings, losses, loneliness. It is specifically given in order to guide men into eternal good; to free them not from care or suffering, but from sin. It is not given to save us from the consequences of our business carelessness or incompetence, to take the place of ordinary prudence in the conduct of our affairs. It is not given us to preserve us from the necessity of strenuous preparation for the tasks before us or from the trouble of rendering decision in the difficult crises of life. It is given to save us from sinning; to lead us in the paths of holiness and truth.

¶ Sir William Robertson Nicoll once remarked that he had been much impressed by the common conviction of his friends that they had been guided in the big decisions of life, and that if they had to make their decisions over again, would not have acted differently. One cannot help remembering that Sir William always chose his friends among successful men and, on the witness of his daughter and nephew, seemed incapable of recognizing that some high quality in a man might have been the hindrance to what the world calls success. A man who has done well for himself can look back on his life with some content and talk about the hand of the Divine Guide as seen in retrospect, but it would be a strange mixing of the values of earth and heaven to assume that a plenitude of this world's goods was a proof of God's direction.[1]

2. We are not led when we go our own way. It is only when an influence distinct from ourselves determines our movements that we can properly be said to be led. He that is led by the Spirit of God is not led by himself or by any element of his own nature, native or acquired, but is led by the Holy Ghost. He has ceased to be what the Scriptures call a 'natural man,' and has become what they call a 'spiritual man'; that is, to translate these terms accurately, he has ceased to be a self-led man and has become a Spirit-led man.

But the leading of the Spirit is no substitute for our own activities. The Holy Spirit leads but does not carry God's children to their destined goal of holiness; while the Spirit determines both the end and the way toward it, His will guiding their action, yet it is by their own effort that they make advance.

Spirit, who makest all things new,
Thou leadest onward; we pursue
  The heavenly march sublime.
'Neath Thy renewing fire we glow,
And still from strength to strength we go,
  From height to height we climb.

But we do not climb from height to height without effort. We are not borne by the Spirit out of our sin into holiness with a smooth and easy movement, almost unnoted by us or noted only with the languid pleasure with which a child carried in its mother's arms may note its progress up some rough mountain road. We are led. We

[1] W. E. Sangster, *God Does Guide Us*, 32.

are under His control and walk in the path in which He sets our feet.

When Paul therefore declares that the sons of God are led by the Spirit, he is in no way forgetful of the arduous nature of the road over which they are to advance, or of the strenuous exertion on their own part by which alone they may accomplish it. He strengthens and comforts them with the assurance that they are not to tread the path alone; but he does not lull them into inertness. He does not promise them relief from the weariness of the journey, alleviation of the roughness of the road, freedom from difficulty or danger. That they have been placed in the right path, that they will be kept continuously in it, that they will attain the goal—of this he assures them; for this it is to be led of the Spirit of God. But He does not encourage us to relax our own endeavours; for he who is led, even though it be by the Spirit of God, advances by virtue of his own powers and his own efforts. In a word, Paul chooses language to express the action of the Spirit on the sons of God which is in perfect harmony with his other exhortation to the children of God—to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling because they know it is God that is working in them both the willing and the doing according to His own good pleasure.

¶ If men could but be convinced that their task in life is to actualize, by creative effort, their own ideals; that these ideals in them are God-given, and therefore part of what *is meant to be*; and that God is always there, at their service, not to replace their efforts with His own, but to supplement them up to any extent, provided the direction of them is towards the ideal which He has given: then surely there would spring up in many lives, at present commonplace because convinced of their own futility, a hope and an expectancy which would issue in inspiration and achievement. And so we should find provided around us the creative artists to build the new age. But, as it is, probably the majority even of estimable persons tacitly assent to the excuse of Dostoevsky's old sensualist in *The Brothers Karamazov*: 'Let me tell you, stupid, that we here are all of little faith, only from carelessness, because we haven't time; things are too much for us, and, in the second place, the Lord God has given us so little time, only twenty-four hours in the day, so that one hasn't even time to get sleep enough, much less to repent of one's sins.' [1]

It is all a matter of experience, even a matter of experiment. We find the guidance of the Holy Spirit in no other way than by actually running risks in dependence upon His guidance. After all, a man's religion is not much good unless he is prepared to take these risks. When we begin to dare to place our lives under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, life will become both simpler and stronger.

It is not a leading to prosperity, or enjoyment, or luxury, but to God. He has led countless of His servants into suffering, hardship, sorrow, unpopularity, persecution, and disaster. He leads all of us through the accidents of life and the certainty of death into the fullness of the Presence. But His leadership has never been wrong. And the prayer of those whom He leads is not that the will and favour of God may be bent and altered to meet their own wishes and to crown their day with material comfort and pleasure, but that their poor earthly wills may be brought into harmony with the loving and perfect will of God.

In pastures green? Not always; sometimes
He
Who knoweth best, in kindness leadeth me
By weary ways, where heavy shadows be.

And by still waters? No, not always so;
Oft-times the heavy tempests round me blow,
And o'er my soul the waves and billows go.

But when the storm is loudest, and I cry
Aloud for help, the Master standeth by
And whispers to my soul, 'Lo, it is I.'

Above the tempest wild I hear Him say,
'Beyond this darkness lies the perfect day,
In every path of thine I lead the way.'

So, whether on the hill-tops high and fair
I dwell, or in the sunless valleys where
The shadows lie—what matter? He is there.[2]

[1] E. A. Burroughs, *The Valley of Decision*, 316.
[2] Henry H. Barry.

The True Fundamentalism

Rom. viii. 14.—'As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.'

Think of this one thing—the essence of true religion. Think of this as distinct from the things which, however important they may be, are not essential. The first necessity for us all is, that we should have this distinction very clear in our minds as the first necessity for all sound judgment. Take an illustration. There is a well-known passage in Bunyan's works in which he speaks of the Sacraments. And this is what he says: 'Touching shadowish or figurative ordinances I believe that Christ hath ordained but two in His Church . . . both which are of excellent use to the Church in this world. . . . But I count them not the fundamentals of our Christianity. . . . Servants they are, and our mystical ministers.' Now, one is not concerned with the particular controversy which engaged Bunyan at the moment. It was a somewhat complicated tangle of texts and theories about Church order and the like. The point is that Bunyan's genius—his sanctified genius—leads him to cut straight through that tangle to the really important issue. What he must be sure about first of all is this: What is it that is really essential to our spiritual life and fellowship? That is his first concern; and having got that question clearly settled in his own mind he is able to disentangle the other issues and to deal with them with a certain detachment. And that is what we have to do. We have to distinguish between the essential and the non-essential in religion. We have to do it for the sake of our own soul-liberty and for the sake of that tradition which all of us are helping to mould to-day for service and for fulfilment in generations to come. Put it in this way: Every great movement, every institution, in addition to its external forms and organisation, has two aspects from which you may study it; it has a history, a tradition, a legend; and, secondly, it has certain distinctive principles, a certain animating spirit. You have the external forms, you have the history, the legend which explains them, and you have the governing principles, the spirit of the movement.

1. But now, if you want to find out what is the essential genius of the movement or institution, where are you to look for it? Take two illustrations, one from science and one from religious history. To-day there are scientific institutes and associations all over the civilised world; and behind these there is a great body of discovered laws and principles, making up what we may call the law and the testimony of science. And then, too, there is the legend, the history.

(1) Every scientific law that has been liberated into the world of human knowledge has (or had) a bit of biography sticking to it. Every principle of science, that is to say, has been discovered by somebody or other, or by a group of somebodies, who first happened upon that principle and made it common property. We all know the story of Newton and the apple, and Galileo up there on the Tower of Pisa dropping pebbles to the ground, and Archimedes leaping out of his bath and crying, 'Eureka!' because he had then and there solved a scientific problem. But we must observe this: that once these great principles have been discovered and proved and made part of the heritage of human knowledge, the particular legend attached to them takes a secondary place. We don't find scientists to-day dividing off into rival sections, quarrelling about whether or no the story of Newton and the apple is correct history. The discovery, the law of gravitation itself, is the thing; and that remains, though the orchard incident slips away from us beyond all authentication. And so with Archimedes and his bath, or Galileo in Pisa Cathedral testing the swinging of a lamp by the beat of his own pulse. Whether these legends are historical or fanciful, the principles to which they are attached are ours for ever; and it is the principles that are of supreme importance. That is a consideration which Bernard Shaw has presented to us in his preface to *Back to Methuselah*, and its implications are worth pondering.

(2) And now for an illustration from Church history. In the age before the Reformation there was a wealthy merchant of Lyons who experienced a sudden change of heart. He was a money-lender, and the story goes that one day he heard a street-singer singing a ballad about a rich man of olden time—the Blessed Alexis—who gave all his wealth away and spent his days

in Christian poverty and died at last in great peace. And this money-lender, Peter Waldo, listening to that street-singer's simple ballad, had no rest of soul until, like Alexis, he had disbursed his wealth; and then, in the new-found joy of a simple faith and a simple life he gathered his disciples about him and sent them through the south lands reciting the gospel in the language of the people—reciting the parables, and the teachings on the Mount, and the story of Jesus. And to-day in Italy, as a result of Waldo's movement, we have the Waldensian Church. That is the story. The details of it have been disputed. But this we know: that Waldensianism does not stand in this version or that version of Peter Waldo's career but in the great principles and spirit of the gospel which Waldo served. The rest does not matter so tremendously. The story about Luther's toiling on his knees up St Peter's stairs is not the all-important thing about the Reformation. The all-important thing is its great principle of Justification by Faith; and that has come to stay, no matter whether this or that story about Luther is verifiable or no.

2. Now what of the essence of Christianity itself? It is a tragedy that, when it comes to this supreme question, religious men should quarrel and divide over considerations of inferior importance which they must elevate into matters of eternal life and death. They spend all their spiritual energies upon these questions, and no one can finally and absolutely decide them. So long as the world stands there will probably be divergence of opinion about them. These do not belong to the fundamentals of our Christianity. The spirit, the principles—these are the fundamentals.

¶ Think of Jesus' Parable of the Good Samaritan. There is the poor plundered Jew, all gashed and bruised and huddled up on the roadside, and along comes the Good Samaritan and gives him first-aid, and takes him to the inn. Did it really happen? If you go to Palestine your dragoman no doubt will show you the house where the Good Samaritan lived! But does anyone for a moment suppose that the worth of the Parable for us to-day depends in any wise upon whether there once lived some man of Samaria who did the things of which our Lord speaks? Jesus says: 'There is the picture. Now go and do likewise. Live in the spirit of it. Act on the principle of it.'

There is a realm above legend and history and affidavits and certified dates. There is a realm of things about which no such certification is needed. The gospel is! Somehow or other this gospel picture has come to be. It is here, verifiably, before us. Some Divineness has somehow brought it forth. And there are strange happenings in the souls of men, flowing forth from it continually. Suppose we begin there. Suppose we ourselves look at it and see if in some sort the Divineness of it may not happen all over again, in us and through us. Let us, then, get up into that region of the soul where Truth is sovereign, where Spirit and Purpose and Conscience and Love are the great realities. In that region we can aspire, we can pray, in that region our hearts can kindle, in that region our souls can breathe. When we get there we begin to be assured of what we believe and whom we believe, and that not through legal-evidential argument or the latest report of antiquarian research, or the latest reassuring pronouncement of this or that eminent investigator, but because of the witness of our own souls to moral and spiritual reality and thus to the great tradition of all the ages of quest and of faith. The great self-evidencing principles and the eternal Spirit of Christianity have been released into the world. To-day they are above all question of time and place, of date and fact. They are accessible to earnest desire, to moral purpose, to the humble heart. 'As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.'

¶ I could not tell you too strongly my own deep and deepening conviction that the truths which I teach are true. Every year they shed fresh light on one another, and seem to stretch into immensity. They explain to me life, God, and the Bible; and I am certain that what fresh light I shall receive will be an expansion and not a contradiction of what I have. As for the words in which I try to make others see what I see, they are indeed poor and bewildered enough. But there is no bewilderment in my mind, though much that is incomplete. The principles are rooted in human nature, God, and the being of things, and I find them at the root of every page in Scripture. The *principles* cannot be reversed. My mind has grown by a regular development year by year,

and I could as easily doubt my own existence as doubt those truths which have grown with my growth, and strengthened with my strength. They are not opinions nor theories, but convictions—part of my being, of my habits of thought and life—colouring everything, 'the fountain light of all my day, the master light of all my seeing.' These are the truths for which men go to the stake, and relinquish, joyfully, friends, sympathy, good name, worldly prospects. They do not depend upon the accuracy of an intellectual process, but upon the verdict of all the highest powers of soul. For instance, I would not give up a single thing on the certainty that St Paul did not write the Epistle to the Hebrews. These are matters of intellectual investigation, and I am not sure that I am right, because I am neither certain that all the evidence is before me, nor that I have rightly judged from the evidence. But if I am asked to surrender *convictions*, I cannot do it for any reward, nor for fear of any loss; these depend upon all I know of God; they are the things seen in the noonday light of my soul; and I cannot pretend to submit my judgment in such things to wiser men or better men. It would be mock humility. I might just as readily, at their bidding, say that green is scarlet. It may be so; but if it be, my whole vision is deranged by which I have walked and lived, and by which this world is beautiful. To say that I am ready for any martyrdom in the defence of my *convictions*, and that I cannot affect to have doubts or misgivings about them, is only to say that they *are* convictions.[1]

The Assurance of Sonship

Rom. viii. 15.—'Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.'

In this very familiar verse St Paul is summing up one of the most notable changes which Christianity makes to the life of man. He says, to put the matter in the briefest possible way, that Christianity means the end of the old bondage to fear and the beginning of a new spirit, which he calls the spirit of adoption. The contrast suggests a picture. On the one hand is the man brought up under an older religious system, who cowers before God, having no trust or confidence, uncertain as to what God will do next. The result of that system is a whole network of sacrifices and abasements in which the chief motive is to please God and to alter His attitude, and a morality which is not so much a rule of life that man himself believes in, as a body of laws which God ordains and which man fears to disobey. Paul declares that, wherever Christianity is clearly understood, that whole order of religion goes by the board. There is no more bondage to fear, and no more of the craven spirit in which a man's conduct is determined by the terrors which fill his mind. On the contrary, man is invited to stretch out his hand and take the hand of God offered to him; he is adopted into an order of life in which God is Father and man is His child. This means that for those who have joined themselves to Christ the whole world of their experience—not merely this or that detail in it—has got a completely new appearance and meaning. It is not only that they have left off worshipping this or that idol, or given up trying to fulfil the requirements of the Jewish Law. They have got into a new atmosphere. Before they were like slaves in a house not their own, with no clear idea what the master was about; now they are like sons in their own house, who have some idea at least of their father's aims and are naturally inclined to sympathize with them and help them forward. They call to Him, Abba, Father when and as they will, and are sure He hears.

Not to be able to say Abba Father means that there is no real order in the world. Anything may happen at any time, and there is nothing but caprice or accident to account for it. No man really knows for certain the conditions in which he lives. He is all adrift; he lives in the world as a slave, not as a son—as a slave who knows not what his master doeth, whose best-laid plans and best-contrived service may be overthrown by his master's unintelligible caprice. This is the frame of mind which seeks to magic, and expects to find the right path to religion in all sorts of strange, unnatural, dark corners; it listens readily to charlatans, and pays them for the encouragement they give it. Persons who live so are rightly said to have a spirit of bondage in them, and deep down in their hearts there is an endless harassing fear.

[1] F. W. Robertson, *Life and Letters*, 368.

In their confusion and uncertainty they can never be sure that they have not made a false step and involved themselves unwittingly in ruin.

On from room to room I stray,
Yet my Host can ne'er espy,
And I know not to this day
Whether guest or captive I.

In contrast with what Paul saw all around him he places the new faith: on the one side, a spirit of bondage with the prevailing motive, fear: on the other side, the spirit of adoption with the prevailing motive of loving and filial confidence.

1. There is a question which we often hear expressed in various forms. How, it is asked, does the Christian ideal of goodness, the Christian idea of the truly satisfactory life, differ from all others? What is the essential difference, if any, between the Christian good man and every other type of good man?

Paul in the text suggests the chief and most fundamental thing we can say about it. He had known in his own experience two kinds of good life. His former career as a prominent adherent of Jewish orthodoxy had brought him into contact with many good men. He himself had been then, by any standard of the world, emphatically a good man. It is true that 'the flesh' had not been wholly conquered; but it had not been triumphant. He had waged an unremitting warfare against the lower impulses; he had never swerved in his reverence for the law of righteousness. But he was conscious of one grave defect. Then, the law had been something outside him, imposed from above, given for his obedience; and his attitude towards it had been that of the slave, 'the spirit of bondage.' The predominant motive had been one of fear—fear of God, and also fear of the evil spirits in whom he believed. Paul has no doubt that the gospel has given him something absolutely new. When he gave his utter allegiance to Christ, and began to live by faith in Him, the law ceased to be outside him. He began to live by a law of the Spirit within him. And his experience was not that of slavery, but of freedom, his dominant motive not fear but love. In the old days he might have said, 'the fear of God constraineth me'; now he says, 'the love of Christ constraineth me.'

¶ Rousseau, speaking of certain happy years in his life, says, 'I did what I wished to do, I was what I wished to be. . . . I was entirely free, and better than free; for, subjected by my affections alone, I did only what I wished to do.'

Perhaps the contrast which Paul had in mind is not the one which affects us most to-day. Excessive reverence for law and ordinances is not the prevailing fault of this generation. When we compare the Christian good man with the good man outside Christianity, we are not thinking of the type represented by the pious Pharisee. We are thinking of men who are directing themselves by their own enlightened reason and following clearly conceived principles of conduct. Such men are not far from the Kingdom of God. The spirit of Christ works in minds who never worshipped Him. But, at the same time, we must add that there is a real contrast, a vital divergence. The contrast is summed up in one word of our text—'received.' 'Ye received the spirit of adoption,' says Paul. It was not your own spirit which gained this freedom, not your own reason and will which brought you to the good life. You did not apprehend—you were apprehended. 'As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.'

In common life we know the difference between the conduct which is, at every point, dictated by external rules, and the conduct which flows spontaneously from the clear perception and affectionate acceptance of obligation. The service of a loving wife or sister is not the same thing as the service of a hired servant: and the service of a hired servant changes its character, and becomes a noble and gracious thing, when, besides the link of legal contract between employer and employed, there has grown up a genuine respect and affection between them. Whatever work we have to do in the world changes its whole character when we cease to regard it as a compulsory task, and find in it an object of personal interest and enjoyment.

¶ 'Nearly fifty years ago,' says Dr Fosdick, 'my mother sent me to pick a quart of raspberries. I did not want to pick a quart of raspberries, and I dragged reluctant feet to the berry patch in rebellion against an evil world

where a small boy who wants to do something else has to pick raspberries. Then a new idea came: it would be fun to pick two quarts of raspberries and surprise the family. That changed everything. I had so interesting a time picking two quarts of raspberries, to the utter amazement of the household, that, although it happened nearly half a century ago, I never have forgotten it.'

2. We might have supposed that when once this contrast had been clearly made it would have been almost unnecessary to do anything further; the superiority of the new over the old would have been made so luminously clear. But this has not been the experience of the Church. There is always surviving in man's mind the tendency to relapse into the old point of view; it is not easy for mankind to rise to, and to remain on, the level of his highest religious privileges; he is always tending to slip back into the heathen view of religion, that it is an odd, extraneous thing, which only crosses life in irregular and eccentric fashion, and that it is the result of some toilsome process.

Many people are dimly conscious of this lack somewhere in their religious life. Instead of religion curing all their cares, it proves only a new burden, perhaps the weariest burden of them all. Instead of healing other failures, it is the department in which they fail most frequently. Everything in the Bible stimulates the hope that religion will bring new life, power, confidence, joy; but to them it appears to bring only a sadder sense of weakness and troubled doubt.

¶ 'I have never been able to forget an indignant answer which I got from a heathen,' writes an Indian missionary. 'We have a religion which makes great demands upon us in money, cattle, sacrifices, and we meet these demands. We have a king who asks for money, grain, compulsory service, and we give him what he asks. We have a government which saddles us with police arrangements, and we groan and bear it all. And now you come with demands which put all the rest in the shade. It is cruel to torture with the terrors of the law men like us who have grown up in fear and terror all their lives.'

In that old pagan world into which the gospel burst there was nothing men of that age needed so much to be saved from as just the sickening and stupefying dread of things. Life was hemmed round with darkness, and the darkness was full of devils. To understand what that signifies for human life, you need only talk to a modern missionary. He is up against the same phenomenon. It is pretty safe to say that at this moment the dark pall which hangs over every heathen soul in Africa—the great background of existence—is fear: fear of Nature, fear of man, fear of God.

Fetishism to-day in West Africa, it is said, is one horrid, paralysing fear, a haunting sense of insecurity, working out in distrust of everybody, even of one's own family; and, as every act has to be carefully deliberated and all possible precautions taken against evil influences, the result is an appalling waste of human effort and waste of human life, and the decay of all hope of progress or even of escape. And in that dreadful bondage lies one of the strongest of the modern incentives to missionary enterprise—to show them the truth as it is in Jesus' love and the Fatherhood of God; to liberate them from the bondage which is hell enough here and now. That surely appeals to every Christian instinct that we possess.

¶ 'The state of fear in which the savage lives,' wrote 'Tamate' of New Guinea, 'is truly pitiful. The falling of a dry leaf at night, the tread of a pig, or the passage of a bird, all arouse him, and he trembles with fear. A savage seldom sleeps. He fears ghosts and hobgoblins.'

¶ A missionary was teaching a Hindu woman the Lord's Prayer. When he got to the end of the first clause, 'Our Father which art in heaven,' she stopped him, 'If God is our Father,'' she said, 'that is enough. There is nothing now to fear.'

And yet when we turn from that extreme form of bondage to this Christian century and this Christian society of ours, are we able to assert that we are quite free of the same spirit? If we were asked to write down the things that we fear, and if we were all quite frank and honest about it, it would be a surprisingly long list, and it would be of extraordinary variety.

There is, of course, a legitimate apprehension which is merely the other side of due care and forethought. There is a fear which is instinctive, which is physiological and healthy; like the fear of physical pain, or the fear of death,

which is simply a form of the instinct of self-preservation, something that is implanted in us by God.

But we have other fears than these. Fear of ourselves, for instance; and fear of society—what men will say about us; fear of ill-health for ourselves or, perhaps, for those dear to us; fear of some wrongdoing in the past becoming known; fear of some skeleton leaving its cupboard and walking out into the light of day; fear of financial calamity, fear of loneliness, fear of old age, and so forth. And those who know most about the matter, and those who are most honest with themselves, will be the first to confess that Paul has chosen the right word 'bondage'—a state of slavery; a fetter upon self-expression, self-development, growth in stature; chains upon one's happiness, chains upon one's power to be or to do one's best.

¶ St John Ervine has an unforgettable character portrait of a Mr Timms, a clerk in a large London office. The life of Mr Timms revolved continually around the thought: Supposing that one day he should be unable to work, what should become of him? He would awaken at night, crying out in fear because of some horrible dream in which he saw himself dismissed from the service of his employers for one reason or another. The same terror was his evil genius by day. So as the years passed the despotism of this fear took heavy toll of the best possibilities of his life. Something inside of him would urge the quest of adventures. 'Do something to show that you are alive,' it would say, and the fear of endangering his position by some time yielding to one of these moods added another to his many terrors. He thought of marriage, and the thing inside kept saying, 'Risk it, man, risk it!' But the thought of the possibility of getting sick and out of employment with a wife and perhaps a family to support, drove him back to the dreariness of his dingy bed-sitting-room. Finally, the inevitable comes; he loses his position and his savings rapidly dwindle. Sickness overtakes him and the doctor's verdict is that he has only a short time to live. The doctor is amazed at the calm which the announcement brings. 'Thank God,' said Mr Timms to himself. 'I am safe now.' In three months he was dead. It is a pathetic picture of a man vanquished in his fight against fear.[1]

[1] D. A. Maclennan.

Paul is dealing with the bondage of fear in religion, but the emancipation from that particular fear must deeply affect every other fear which lingers in the human mind. When the supreme fear goes every other fear is shaken, just as every corner of a darkened room is lit up when the shutters are thrown back and the sunshine is allowed to enter.

¶ 'The compensation,' writes a German author, 'for the loss of that sense of personal independence which man so unwillingly gives up, is the disappearance of all *fear* from one's life, the quite indescribable and inexplicable feeling of an inner *security*, which one can only experience, but which, once it has been experienced, one can never forget.'[1]

3. Sonship is an obligation. Fear has gone, but not obedience. We have put away that old fear. But we have put in its place the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ to whom we owe the allegiance of our souls and to whom we offer the loyal and loving obedience of men who do His will because they love Him. This assurance of sonship, far from tempting to recklessness, will make a thoughtful man feel that he has something to guard, something to live for, something constraining him to vigilance and self-denial and prayer.

The redemption of life from fear does not mean that men are left free to do as they like without regard to consequences. It is not an invitation to enter a world in which there are no laws and no punishment for their infraction. There are laws of God for the ordering of life, reverence for which is the secret of all wise living.

St Peter, in one of the most instructive passages of holy Scripture, urges that the consciousness of having been set free and of being admitted into filial communion with God will directly promote watchfulness and awe. 'If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judges according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here *in fear*; forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed—or set free—with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation—or empty manner of life—handed down from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ.' As the redeemed or freedmen

[1] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 275.

of Christ we are entitled to call upon the just God as our Father. But *therefore* it is not for us to live carelessly, without purpose or aim, doing the first thing that routine or desire suggests. This is the very bondage from which Christ came to rescue us. No, the children of Him who is known to us through Jesus Christ must feel reverence in their hearts for the Heavenly Father, and then for their brethren, for the world which He creates, for the work which He has put us into the world to do.

Jesus once began by saying, 'Be ye perfect'; and if He had stopped there, we should have despaired. Perfect—we find it hard enough to be respectable! But, as you remember, He went on, 'As your Father is perfect,' and that makes all the difference. If God is Father, why, then, like other fathers, He will help us. He will bear with failure that He may nurse us back to victory. He will make us holy, not that He may love us, but for the reason that He loves us now. Work out from sonship in Christ as our starting-point and our source of power at every moment—there is the secret that opens the gates of attainment and self-control.

Put on My fetters and thou shalt be free;
  Embrace My altar and thy cords shall fall;
Become love's captive, and thy soul shall be
  Lord of itself and master over all.[1]

The Witness of the Spirit

Rom. viii. 16.—'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.'

THE distinctive characteristic of man is his spiritual nature. We admire his skill; we marvel at his inventiveness; we are amazed at his executive ability; we thrill to the productions of his genius and praise the achievements of his intellect: but these are things which we can analyse and more or less explain, and to which we can assign a certain market value. Wonderful as they are they do not represent man's highest glory, and in considering them we do not feel that we are dealing with sacred things nor treading on the confines of a mystery. Who has not at some time asked himself the question whether that little personality which expresses itself in the clear-cut workings of the brain, in the well-defined sensations of the work-a-day world, in the reasoned inferences of daily life, be after all the true man, the genuine self? We may be shrewd, practical, and unromantic—

But often, in the world's most crowded streets,
But often, in the din of strife,
There rises an unspeakable desire
After the knowledge of our buried life;
A thirst to spend our fire and restless force
In tracking out our true, original course;
A longing to inquire
Into the mystery of this heart which beats
So wild, so deep in us—to know
Whence our lives come and where they go.

It is when we see the depth and continuity of man's longing for knowledge of God, his perpetual quest for truth, his pursuit of an abiding happiness, his desire for a comprehensive understanding of his life, his yearning for power to live his life richly and fully without failure—it is then that we begin to realize his true greatness. We measure him, not by his achievements, but by his aspirations. His restlessness, discontent, and dissatisfaction are the signs of a nature incomplete in itself, incapable of perfecting itself; the spirit that stirs within him goes out in quest of the Divine for its completion. Man has always been a seeker after God, and he cannot rest until he finds.

But there is a larger truth declared in the Bible, a truth that strengthens and consoles—that God is a seeker after man; and in this grander fact we find the justification of our quest and the assurance of our hope. Our quest is not a wild adventure nor a fruitless speculation; it is a sober undertaking whose issue is guaranteed. We wonder at the extraordinary confidence of Christ in assuring His followers that everyone who seeks shall find; but the explanation of it lies in the fact that God is also seeking man, and a universe that has God for its author gives an honest response to investigation. It is meant that they shall meet, unite, co-operate; and find joy in the liberation of the creative forces that make a new heaven and a new earth. Does man discover God, or does God disclose Himself to man? Both are true. The whole truth is not on one side or the other, but in the meeting and mingling of the two. Looked at from the human side, man's knowledge of God is discovery;

[1] George Matheson.

approached from the Divine side, it is disclosure. In a sense the telescope discovers the star; on the other hand, the star is there all the time, and waits to pour its light through the telescope. The heart is the telescope that discovers God; but the discovery once made, certain and assured, the light of God abides, and continues to flood the soul with His radiance.

¶ Epictetus says: 'When you have shut your door, and darkened your room, remember never to say you are alone: for God is within, and your genius is within, and what need they of light to see what you are doing.'

1. The text sets before us the great truth that we need constantly to be reminded of, that true religion is the action of the Spirit of God upon our spirits. It is the life of God in the spirit of man; its active principle is the Spirit of God; its realm and sphere is in our spirits. So then true religion is *not a set of creeds*, defined and believed just as a man may believe in the North Pole or the law of gravitation. The sphere of religion is not in the man's head, but in the heart. It is not in the intellect, but in the will. Of course the intellect has to examine and inquire, just as a man's ears have to hear the truth, or his eyes to read it; yet it is true that religion does not live in his eyes or ears. The main thing in Paul's view was to look upon God as He appeals to our faith and hope and love, to our spiritual nature. There is much more that is trustworthy in our spiritual apprehensions than in any conceivable intellectual apprehensions. It is the will of God that our understandings should fail us in our relations to the high things of His nature and working. We must make the best use we can of our understandings, and we can do nothing, even as spiritual beings, without them; but we must not be surprised by their being incompetent, by their leaving us quite confused when we try with them to comprehend and define what God is. It is to the heart and the life that God reveals Himself.

¶ 'The heart has its own reasons,' said Pascal, 'which the reasoning faculty does not know. . . . We know the truth not only by reason but also by the heart; and it is in the latter way that we come to know first principles. It is the heart which feels God, not the reasoning faculty. That is what faith is—God sensible to the heart.'

Nor is true religion a matter of forms of worship. These things may be gone through, and all the time the real man, the true self, may lie underneath it all, unmoved and asleep. God is a Spirit. He cannot be satisfied with the outside appearances of things, or with a man's theories about things. He seeks contact and communion with the innermost spirit. Creeds however true, and forms of worship however solemn or impressive or earnest, can never give you the religious life. We must be *born of the Spirit*. The religion of God is a new creation by which new faculties are developed and a new world is possessed. There are eyes opened that do see the things of God; there is a new heaven and a new earth; God is made real, and righteousness is real, and sin is real—things that before were words only become living realities, and the life is ordered in relation to this new revelation and this new consciousness. The manner of this new creation may differ in a thousand ways. With some it may be gentle and gradual as the dawn of day—a kingdom that cometh not with observation; with others it may be a day when sin became a burden and a terror, and salvation was a great deliverance that filled all the soul with wonder and with rapture. This in some form is the beginning of the religious life—it is the Spirit of God in contact with our spirits.

¶ An evening came when I was quite alone in my room and had prepared for rest. In the usual formal way, I had knelt down for a few moments at the bedside to say my evening prayer. Then, without warning, the strong conviction of sin and impurity came upon me with such overpowering strength that every shred of false convention was torn aside, and I knew myself as I really was.

To describe the sudden agony which followed is quite beyond my powers. It broke me down completely. There had been nothing during the day to lead up to this: and in church, where I had attended, there had been no stress laid upon 'conversion' as a necessary religious step in Christian progress. It was agonizing, alarming, and unexpected, breaking in upon me like a lightning flash followed by its crash of thunder, leaving at first nothing but black darkness behind it. I buried my head in my hands and knelt there, alone with God, in an anguish of spirit that blotted out everything else and left me groping for the light. So intense was the

agony that I was quite unconscious of the lapse of the hours as they went by.

So the struggle went on, long into the night. At last a new and wonderful sense of peace and forgiveness came stealing into my life at its very centre, and the tears rushed out, bringing infinite relief. I dare not venture to explain further the process of the change that was wrought in me, and I have shrunk back from even saying so much; but I knew at that time without any doubt that Christ was my Saviour and my Redeemer, and that His love had won my heart for ever.[1]

2. The Apostle summons, as it were, two separate witnesses to establish the mighty fact that we have been received into the family of God. The independence of their testimony is essential to the idea which he endeavours to express. And this becomes apparent when we remember what it is for which the Spirit stands in the thought of the Apostolic Church. To them the Holy Spirit was not simply the universal Life which breathes in all creation and stirs in the personalities of men. No doubt they would have assented to the words of the Book of Wisdom which declares that God's 'deathless spirit is in all things.' But as Christians—and this is the important point for us to remember—it was through Jesus Christ that they had been brought into contact with Him. The Spirit of which Paul speaks is the Spirit of Jesus, whose relationship with the Giver of Life was so intimate that the Apostle could even say, 'The Lord is the Spirit.' So interchangeable do the terms become that to speak of being filled with the Spirit and of being found in Christ are two different modes of expressing a single experience.

Turn to what happened to the infant Church of Christ at Pentecost. In that amazing outpouring of spiritual power they discerned the presence of their Master. They knew it at once for what it was; it was just the same as they had already felt when in communion with Him in the flesh, only mightier, more overpowering, as befitted the fact that He was no longer hampered and restricted by a physical body. It was Jesus Himself in their midst once more; they said so; they were sure of it. And yet somehow it was also God; heaven broke upon them in that wonderful visitation and endued them with a consciousness of power and joy such as they had never had before. They felt themselves to be one with God in a way of which they had had no previous experience. Theirs was now a fullness and richness of life, the like of which was not to be found on earth apart from faith in Christ. Henceforth this Spirit stayed with them; they lived and wrought under His guidance; it made them fearless, high-minded, unworldly, lifted their whole being on to a far loftier plane than that of men's ordinary motives and activities. They did not need to have it proved to them that they were the objects of their Heavenly Father's care, and that it was entirely well with them both for this world and that which was to come; they knew it; the indwelling Spirit told them so.

But note the wording of the text—'The Spirit itself beareth witness *with* our spirit.' There are some who think of the witness of the Spirit as a kind of revelation from heaven; or a thrill of rapture; or a wonderful vision—something which lifts us up above other people, and singles us out as the recognized favourites of God. If anything could make a man a Pharisee it is surely that. It is the very root of that blind and hateful Pharisaism which the Lord denounced so scathingly of old. The witness of the Spirit is not *to* our spirits that we are the children. It is *with* our spirits that God is our Father.

It is not that my spirit says one thing, bears witness that I am a child of God; and that the Spirit of God comes in by a distinguishable process, with a separate evidence, to say Amen to my persuasion; it is that there is one testimony, which has a conjoint origin—the origin from the Spirit of God as true source, and the origin from my own soul as recipient and co-operant in that testimony. From the teaching of this passage, or from any of the language which Scripture uses with regard to the inner witness, it is not to be inferred that there shall rise up in a Christian's heart, from some origin consciously beyond the sphere of his own nature, a voice with which he has nothing to do; which at once, by its own character, by something peculiar and distinguishable about it, by something strange in its nature, or out of the ordinary course of human thinking, shall certify itself to be not *his* voice at all, but *God's* voice. That is not the direction

[1] C. F. Andrews, *What I Owe to Christ*, 91.

in which to look for the witness of God's Spirit. It is evidence borne, indeed, by the Spirit of God; but it is evidence borne not only to our spirit, but through it, *with* it.

3. What is the proof of the witness? First, there is the consciousness of peace and joy—peace as the deep running stream, joy as the flash of the sunbeam reflected on its surface. The flash is there at times, but when it is not there the river still runs. 'Being justified by faith we have peace with God.' Again, 'the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace.' The Philippian gaoler rejoiced believing in God. The Ethiopian Eunuch went on his way rejoicing. When Philip at Samaria had brought Christ to the people there was great joy in that city. We don't have in the narratives any attempts at analysing these facts of consciousness. You get the simple record, and it speaks for itself. Life was not a burden, but a delight. No change in their outward circumstances had taken place at all. A hand had been reached out to them from the unseen world. Jesus had touched them. His witness was in them bearing witness with their spirit that they were born of God.

¶ Said Jacobi, 'The only people I know of who ever enjoyed life, had solid happiness, were the really pious people, who had a vital faith.'

¶ Over twenty years ago I came under a deep conviction of sin. One day the burden became so great that I could work no longer. I put away my books, closed my desk, and left the office. I was walking down Cheapside, when, in the rush and roar of London life, I was enabled to put my hand by faith in the hand of my Saviour. My burden was taken away and my heart was filled with peace and joy in believing.[1]

The other way in which this spiritual presence manifests Himself is in a work immediately commenced of reforming, purifying, and elevating the life. Is not this the everlasting testimony to the gospel, that wherever it comes, it gets its lever under man and lifts him up, not allowing him to continue ignoble, base, false, raising him ever to higher levels and giving him fresh glimpses of the noble possibilities of the new life that has now opened upon him?

¶ The Gulf Stream in its beneficent and hidden influence may be taken as a sort of parable of this spiritual influence. This England of ours should be naturally and properly a land of almost eternal winter. For some eight months of the year our very seas ought to be frozen over so that no ship could approach our shores. Our islands should be a rough rude tract of country where only the hardiest forms of life could survive—a land of forest where wild beasts should roam, whose furs should give to the place almost its only value, and where the deep snows should make agriculture almost impossible. This should be Great Britain—a proud name for so desolate a tract.

What mystery is this which delivers us? Away in the distant Southern world, in the fierce heat of the Tropics, starts the Gulf Stream. It gathers the warmth of the sun and sends it for thousands of miles across the seas to lave our shores. And thus the Arctic winter is driven from us; and our ports are open all the year round; over us stretch the kindlier skies; above us blow the gentler winds; our fields are covered with grass, the valleys are thick with corn; the pastures are covered with flocks and herds, and this favoured land is shut off from extremes and has the summer of the North with the winter of the South.

Now think of some shivering native of Labrador who has heard of this Gulf Stream, and scornfully shakes his head: 'I do not believe it,' says he, 'it is impossible and absurd.' Well, I would not argue the subject. I would only invite him to come and see.

'But where is this Gulf Stream which does such wonders? Can you see it?' No, we cannot see it, *but it is there*—hidden, noiseless, mingling with our waters and transforming our climate.[1]

[1] George Gillett.

Claiming our Spiritual Riches

Rom. viii. 17.—'Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.'

The first disciples of Jesus were fishermen; not many mighty had been called, yet they taught habitually in terms of wealth of the 'unsearchable riches of Christ'; of the depth of the riches and the knowledge and wisdom of God; of Christ, 'who, though he was rich yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich.' They speak like men who

[1] M. G. Pearse, *The Gospel for the Day*, 160.

have struck an Eldorado and sent back word of their fortunate findings; like men who have inherited a great inheritance. They are 'heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.'

1. 'Nothing in the New Testament is a more direct challenge to modern Christians than this consciousness of possessing great spiritual enrichment. When the New Testament asks us whether we believe in the doctrine of the goodness of God revealed in Christ we find it easy to say Yes. When the New Testament asks us whether we have to confess our faith and join the Church, we can say Yes. But when the New Testament asks us whether in consequence our lives are resilient, abounding, buoyant, whether we live no longer the slaves of sin and circumstances, but victorious and inwardly enriched, that is the question to which how often we have to return a hesitant answer. And yet that is the real test we have to face. If a man has received a heritage and will not pay the dues, if the titles lie in some Court of Chancery unappropriated because he does not think they are there at all, that is the state of the unbeliever who lives in the midst of the riches of the spiritual world and yet does not possess them because he does not believe they are there. Such people are heirs of God, but they do not believe they are really rich. They do not walk as heirs of God and joint heirs of Christ.

How impossible it is to make an adequate statement of the meaning of the Christian life that does not take into it as one of its central elements this thought of the present and immediate enrichment of our spiritual experience. For it will not do to interpret Christian living simply in terms of conversion. The experience of conversion was to some of us a luminous hour, from whose initial radiance we never have receded and never want to. But surely that does not exhaust the meaning of the Christian life. Where are the riches that ought to be in a life that has become Christian? Or, again, consider how impossible it is to define a Christian life satisfactorily merely in terms of holding doctrines in the mind. This is not to minimise the importance of doctrine. One might as well try to build York Minster or Cologne Cathedral without plans as to build a great character without ideals about God and life and destiny, the doctrines that chasten and subdue and command. But when a man has these doctrines but has never built his cathedral, of what good are they? The world is not particularly anxious that we should change our ideals, but it does think that our ideals ought to change us. And the world is right. People who believe what we do ought to walk among men with a noble mien and a more jubilant air.

2. If it is impossible adequately to present the Christian life without this inward enrichment of the spirit, the inward enrichment of the spirit is profoundly necessary for the propagation of the gospel. Ever since professional preaching came into the Church—and that was a long time ago—it has trusted the preacher to present the gospel. He will present arguments to men; he will unfold the doctrines and teachings of the gospel; he will make men believe. But not many men are very much impressed by argument. You can get a hundred people to go to a flower show for every one who will read a book on botany. You can get a dozen people to go to a dinner table for one who will read a book on dietetics. Any real argument which is the presentation of the abstract aspects of truth falls largely on unresponsive hearts; carries little enthusiasm. But take your doctrine and put it into a chrysanthemum, and people will look. Take your theories of dietetics and make a real dinner, and people will step in, not because they are interested in dietetics but because they do need food. And take your ideals of God, of Christ and the soul, and destiny, as they are given us in the gospel, and let them be expressed in a rich and flowering life, and people will wait to see, not because they are concerned much about doctrine, but because they do love that kind of living. Wherever there is a real Christian, men stop—like Moses when he saw the burning bush—to see the meaning of that strange entrancing sight. Indeed, there is nothing else that a man can have to convince people of the reality of the spiritual life if he does not possess this actual present enrichment of his own life.

¶ James Chalmers lived perhaps the most romantic and picturesque life of his generation. He dared things in comparison with which even the exploits of Columbus are comparatively tame. He dared to go and live his life for Christ in the South Sea Islands, and he endured there experiences the very narrative of which

makes a man's hair to stand on end. And at last he was eaten by the Fly River cannibals, and so died a martyr to his faith. Well, even so, we are not quite sure about James Chalmers just on that record. Perhaps he was a fanatic; perhaps, like many more men who have done extraordinary things, he was hard-hearted, and the better we knew him the less we would have liked him. So that if you really want to know about James Chalmers you had better ask Robert Louis Stevenson, who knew him in the South Sea Islands. 'You never can weary me of that fellow,' said Stevenson; 'he is as big as a house, and he is far bigger than a church. He quite swept me off my feet. He is the most attractive, simple, great, and interesting man in the whole Pacific.' And that is the keystone of our estimate of James Chalmers. Not only would he do and dare extraordinary things, but he evidently had a real inward and abounding life in Christ.

¶ There are two notable effects of light in this part of Southern India. One is seen on a clear evening when the terra-cotta earth of the Plains, and every brick and tile made of that earth, takes on a brief and amazing brightness. The other is still more fugitive. It is never seen except in thundery weather, and then only on the hills that run down the western coast like a spine set out of place. The sun's rays striking up from the sea in sunrise are flung back by the thunder-cloud, and falling on mountain and forest turn the whole world to rose. The loveliness of such moments is unearthly. You stand speechless on some rock in the heart of that celestial rose. You can only worship. Worthy, worthy to be worshipped is the God who can imagine such beauty and command it. All your soul worships. Be still and know that I am God.

The beauty passes. The rose-light melts into the light of day, and in this it is a figure of the true. There are certain glories that are brief, like those lovely lights, but there is the common sunlight that is the life of every day. We live far too little in this light of life. What a witness to the world Christians would be if only they were more evidently very happy people. 'There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.' If we lived in the light of that Countenance, continually filled by the God of Hope with all joy and peace in believing, the dreary question, Who will show us any good? would be answered.[1]

3. Let us ask ourselves this: Why is it that, believing what we do believe, we so lack this enrichment of life, and so little walk as though we really were heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ? The answer can be briefly put under two headings.

In the first place, it is because we believe one way and habitually think another. When members are admitted to the Christian Church we hear the old time-honoured questions asked: Do you believe in God? Do you believe in Christ?—and all the dear, familiar statements with which we confessed our faith, and our fathers before us. But a thoughtful man cannot forbear saying to himself—To be sure they believe these fundamental things, but what about that deeper, more vital, more controlling matter? What about the processes of their habitual thinking? For it is not what we believe by general assent that makes us what we are. It is the way in which we habitually think. Here we stand weaving the threads of thought in a ceaseless shuttle, and only what thus is woven in becomes our real possession. The rest is an unclaimed heritage. So these ideas of the Christian gospel may be like skeins of thread, possessed to be sure, but laid upon a shelf, and not woven habitually into the daily thinking of our lives. Take, for example, a man who believes in the Holy Spirit. Now, if he means anything vital when he says he believes in the Holy Spirit he means this, that just as his body is surrounded and sustained by a physical universe, so his spirit is surrounded and sustained by the Spirit of God, on whose resources he can draw. But of all the hundreds of people who would most undoubtedly say that they believe in the Holy Spirit, how many of them habitually think that way? Here are two men who last Sunday were in Church and confessed that they believed in the Holy Spirit. Now trouble has fallen upon them. Watch those men; watch the way they take it. One man is saying to himself: 'I can't stand it; it is not fair; it is not right; nobody could stand up under a thing like this.' The other man is saying to himself: 'This thing has got to be gone through with; therefore it can be gone through with. I am not alone; there are

[1] Amy Carmichael, *Gold by Moonlight*, 73.

spiritual resources about me; I can draw on them.' The fact that these two men both believed in the Holy Spirit did not make any difference at all. What made the difference was that one of them so really believed that he was habitually thinking the truth of it into his daily life.

¶ John Morley said about Gladstone: 'He was one of that high and favoured household who, in Emerson's noble phrase, "live from a great depth of being."'

Secondly, the reason why we believe so much and live so poorly is not simply a failure in habitual thinking, but a failure in prayer, for prayer is the art of claiming and using some of the small portion of our great inheritance for the daily need of our lives. It is this aspect of the Christian life that the typical modern man understands least, and the reason is plain. We have heard lately a great deal about natural laws. Every time a man utilises a natural law he lays his hand on a new force, and becomes able to do for himself things his father never dreamed of doing. And so the characteristic ambition of our modern age is to learn more of natural laws, get hold of more powers and do things. But with that fatal lack of balance which we so continuously display, the acting side of our life has so been stressed that the receptive side has suffered, and in religion prayer is the receptive side of the Christian life. Prayer is the art of claiming and using a little of our Divine inheritance as the need for it arises in daily life. It is making small drafts on the great inheritance according to the daily need. And so the greatest praying is never done in Church, in formal moment, when you fall on your knees. The greatest praying is done by people who have seen how slender is that inward veil that separates them from the unseen, and with what a soft breath of thought it can be brushed aside, and they can stand in the presence of the unseen Friend, their great Resource—'heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.' Paul says we are that. Are we? Have we so habitually thought the gospel into our lives and prayed it into our lives that men who know us know we are that—heirs of God and brethren of Christ?

The Waiting Earth

Rom. viii. 18, 19.—'For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward. For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God.' (R.V.)

1. It is characteristic of the Bible to face the worst, but always with a sense that the worst is not incurable and that there is a remedy for the evil, a way out of the confusion and distress. That is what we find in this great and often-quoted passage, in which St Paul looks out on the sadness of a suffering world.

It is wonderfully modern. It breathes a sympathy with Nature which finds expression in any amount of recent poetry. Nature, we think, would resent a good deal of the sympathy that we offer her. It is too like the sympathy we offer one another: it is well meant, but it either goes too far or it falls short. It is too clever by half; or it is too timid. The Old Testament has a marvellous sympathy with the happiness of Nature. The floods clap their hands, the valleys laugh and sing, the hills rejoice before the Lord: but it has less heart for Nature's sorrow. There it is that St Paul is most wonderful. He gets to the very heart of the sadness of things. He notes how much vanity there is in Nature—how much that is ineffective and disappointing, how much waste and sadness, by reason of the omnipresent law of corruption, dissolution and decay under which she is laid. He feels this as from Nature's own heart. He has an ear for the universal cry of positive pain, pain as of a woman in travail, which is one at least of the most unmistakable voices of Nature.

> The woods decay, the woods decay and fall,
> The vapours weep their burden to the ground,
> Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath,
> And after many summers dies the swan.

This is wonderful, there is nothing like it anywhere else. Many people, even though they cannot put it into words, realise the suffering of the world, they hear the louder and acuter cries of pain, but they miss the quieter symptoms: the half-suppressed sigh, the restlessness, the weariness, the silent despondency of it all. But St Paul might have lived in the very heart of

Nature, just as he lived a thousand lives in the hearts of those he loved. He has his finger on the pulse of Nature as surely as he has it on the pulse of Galatia or Corinth or Philemon or Timothy!

2. But Nature is not only suffering. Nature is expectant. St Paul's words of course are difficult, for he is dealing with a difficult matter. It might seem as though he were reading into the heart of the dumb or the inanimate Creation the hopes and fears of the human race; or crediting it with some vague surmise of the purpose of God's love. It is subject to 'vanity' not willingly, but by reason of Him who has subjected it in hope. It is just possible that even in Instinct (of which we speak as though we knew all about it) there may be qualities we fail to appreciate. It may be more than mere fancy that makes us recognise something like wistfulness, 'unsatisfied desire to understand,' in dumb beasts, some faint echo in their hearts of our own heart's desire. To the mind of the Apostle, just as Creation is linked in suffering, so too Creation is linked in expectant hope—and the future of Nature is bound up with the future of Man: her hope with ours. But St Paul goes further, for he makes the liberation of Nature from this bondage of futility dependent on the liberation of man. Creation waits for the revealing of the sons of God, for it is into the glorious liberty of the children of God that Creation is to be delivered.

¶ In Nature herself, without man, there lies a waiting and hoping, a looking and yearning, after an unknown something. Yes; when above there, where the mountain lifts its head above all others, that it may be alone with the clouds and storms of Heaven, the lonely eagle looks forth into the grey dawn, to see if the day comes not; when by the mountain torrent the brooding raven listens to hear if the chamois is returning from his nightly pasture in the valley; and when the soon uprising sun calls out the spicy odours of the thousand flowers—the Alpine flowers, with heaven's deep blue, and the blush of sunset on their leaves—then there awake in Nature, and the soul of man can see and comprehend them, an expectation and a longing for a future revelation of God's majesty.[1]

¶ Gwilym O. Griffith, in a striking passage, comparing Paul to Michelangelo, of whom Walter Pater said, 'With him the very rocks seem to have life—they have but to cast away the dust and scurf that they may rise and stand upon their feet,' speaks of Nature as 'a plagued, dishevelled captive, mighty in her bonds, leaning forward with shaded eyes to scan the far horizon for the appearing of the sons of God.'

Now, what all this may mean ultimately, in the last event, in what we call the final consummation, we may be quite unable to imagine. We can see our way to believing that the ultimate manifestation of the sons of God may include the perfect liberation of all there is, and that when they shine as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father, we may have the peace and the glory of a new heaven and a new earth. But the more we know of religion the less inclined we are to think of anything as coming *only* at the end. Everything that is to be hereafter, is in some sense here already: Resurrection, Judgment, Eternal Life. Even now 'the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God.'

¶ Here are the simple words that give the main conclusion of a difficult book: 'Neither an Eternal Life that is already fully achieved here, nor an Eternal Life to be begun and known solely in the beyond satisfies these requirements (those of Religion). But only an Eternal Life already begun and truly known in part here, though fully to be achieved and completely to be understood hereafter, corresponds to the deepest longings of man's spirit as touched by the pre-eminent Spirit, God.'[1]

3. What he means by 'sons of God' St Paul has just explained in an earlier verse—'as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.' Let no one suppose that the phrase is used in any merely theological sense. Their mark is their unselfishness, their motto is 'For others,' their Master is Jesus Christ. It matters not greatly whether their contribution be labelled sacred or secular, for the motive makes it all one. One son of God may find his life-work in preaching the gospel. Another may find his in a laboratory, trying to isolate the bacillus of some disease. And the earnest expectation of creation is waiting for that man. The way of progress is blocked there until he finds his bacillus. The sons of God to-day are all those who are trying to do what they can to

[1] Longfellow, *Hyperion*, vi.

[1] Von Hügel, *Eternal Life*, 396.

benefit their fellows, in any direction, with the love of God in their hearts.

¶ One of the outstanding figures of the last century was that of Lord Shaftesbury. When he died this is what the *Times* wrote about him: 'He was 'the most conspicuous recent example of a man who, born to great station and ample fortune, deliberately devoted a long life neither to pleasure, nor to personal advancement, nor to political power, but to furthering the material, moral, and religious well-being of his countrymen.' The world groaned and travailed. Earth has many voices, some of them are signals of distress. No one hears them all, and some hear none of them. The voice Lord Shaftesbury heard most clearly was the voice of the children, the victims of thoughtless or brutal tyranny in factory or mine. They waited long and waited with a most helpless patience; not for a movement, but for a man, for the manifestation in courage and simplicity and lifelong devotion of the sons of God.

Whenever any man, with the power to help, refuses, and does not heed his call, he is hindering God's plan. Perhaps that is why our Lord takes such a serious view of those who simply do nothing. Why did the man do wrong who buried his talent? Because God needed it, because His plan ran through it, as it runs through every talent He gives, and He could not fulfil His purpose without it. Why could not the rich man heap up riches for his own private ends? Because groaning and struggling creation, groping its way upwards to fuller, happier life, waits for the revealing of the sons of God, and every rich man has it in his power to be such a real and helpful son, if he only will. The Apostle makes bold to say to every man who can do or give anything at all for the sake of others, 'God's great world-purpose is halting and pausing for want of you.'

4. Think, again, of the statement of the text in relation to the natural world. We cannot forget how often the explorer has been degraded into the exploiter, and the colonist has carried into new lands the horrid contagion of civilized vice. But where kindness has gone hand in hand with courage, and justice with enterprise, how glorious has been the result! Surely there is a sort of *liberation* from the *bondage of corruption* when what was wasted is turned to use, and the pestilential swamp is reclaimed, and the wilderness becomes a fertile field; and back goes the jungle, and forward goes the farm! Surely St Paul would have recognized a partial but significant fulfilment of the hope of creation, an earnest of complete fulfilment, in what a clean civilization has been able to do in Canada or Central Africa.

¶ 'On my way out to Australia,' says the Bishop of Liverpool, 'I saw from the ship hundreds of miles of African coast—the edge of wild and desolate and haggard country—useless, dangerous. In Australia I saw the fringe of vast tracts of half-created land, waiting to be finished for the service of man. Material creation is indeed not yet complete. When it was begun God said, Behold, it is very good. But it was not perfect. Does He mean to complete it? Yes, He is doing it. He is completing it—through us. We are God's chosen fellow-workers to finish His work with Him.

It may seem a very small matter, but even when a dumb creature, a horse or a dog, passes from the hands of a bad master to those of a good one, there is just a hint of the sort of liberation that may come of the revelation of the sons of God. There is a good deal to be said for a belief that we have not half exhausted the possibilities of the control of the spirit in the sphere of sense.

It is good to think of these things; for we sometimes lack confidence, and it takes some confidence to assert that what the world really needs is more good men and more good women, and still more confidence to assert that the definitely Christian type is that which the world needs most.

'If thou knowest the gift of God!' The regenerative force is His, not ours, or rather it is ours in Him through Christ; for 'as many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God'; to have Christ's Spirit, to bear Christ's likeness, to do His Will, to carry out His purpose, to be strong in His strength, to know and to love Him.

¶ In the closing weeks of the War a young British airman was standing by a roadside not far from the Menin Gate of Ypres at a point where there happened to be a crucifix. A body of troops came swinging past, just released from the trenches, on their way to rest billets. They were full of cheerfulness and expressed it,

as the young airman put it, in coarse jokes and rotten soldier songs. But he noticed that as they passed the figure of Christ on the Cross, the rotten songs and jokes died down. They felt the spell. They were different for the moment at least. They were ashamed of themselves and conscious of something better within them. Then they passed on, and the spell faded, and one after another took up the old story, and a few minutes later, no doubt, they had forgotten all that in those moments had risen up in their hearts. But at least the incident set the young airman thinking, and he felt: 'What is wrong is that He cannot get down from the Cross to follow them, to go with them into their real life. But I could: I could go on His behalf.' And in that moment was born a resolution in his heart that, years afterwards, took him into the Christian ministry. Here is the point. The influence faded, the spell was broken, because there was only the Son of God hanging there, tethered to His cross. But that spell can always be renewed and that influence multiplied and spread indefinitely, in proportion as we let Him come down from His cross and go with us while we take up our own cross daily and follow Him. 'The universe is on tiptoe with expectancy, waiting for the sons of God to be revealed': life-giving spirits like their Elder Brother who, by His spirit, lives in them.[1]

The Apocalypse of the Sons of God

Rom. viii. 19.—'For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God.' (R.V.).

The exact word which the Apostle uses here is 'apocalypse'—'the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the apocalypse of the sons of God.' When he uses the term 'apocalypse,' or 'unveiling,' it seems to imply that redemption is a secret process, something which is going on in the world at large, as well as in individual souls; while the results of this process are not yet disclosed or apparent, but they will some day become apparent in some Divine event, near or far off. It is true that St Paul might have used the word 'apocalypse' in the literary sense which it had in his day, and in the times just before and after his own. In that sense, he would have stood waiting, like St John in Patmos, before a sealed book whose contents are not yet known—except only that they are lamentation, mourning, and woe, distress and perplexity of nations and the like. Paul was not insensible to this kind of literature; he himself could become eschatological upon occasion, and his ears were quite attentive and alert to the voice of actual or possible suffering in the world. No one could accuse him of easy optimism unbefitting war-time. The Apostle does not try to write a Pilgrim's Progress with all the fighting left out, with no devils and no giants. These very chapters in Romans are full of world-groans, and convicted sinners' groans, and groanings of the sons of God, and of the Spirit of God. The whole creation is in travail, and has been travailing for long, and will so continue until 'the whole creation join in one.' If it found a voice, it might cry, 'O wretched creation that I am! Who shall deliver me?' In which case it would hear the oracle that 'creation itself shall be delivered from bondage into liberty.' But this, however, only corresponds on a great scale to the experience of the divided soul expressed in Romans vii.: it tells us that Nature as well is torn by conflicting purposes, and has a soul-life in conflict with the body-life. The saints also are sighing their own plaints, because there is something for which they are waiting, but which is not wholly theirs; they are sighing in the midst of satisfaction, and they are never so completely satisfied that they cannot sigh themselves towards a better country than that which they inhabit. St Paul describes this attitude of mind as a waiting for the apocalypse, that is, the unveiling, of sonship.

1. Let us consider the force of the figure. What is this unveiling, or uncovering, of which the Apostle speaks? We know something about what unveiling means on the plane of child-life. For example, we keep up the habit of Christmas, when we lay ourselves out in gifts for the bairns; and then we hide away what we have laid out, so that our gifts may appear in the fullness of time—to use a Scriptural phrase which Christmas has consecrated. It is a family instinct thus to behave; the top-shelf is in request, the secret drawer is in use, the passages and store-rooms hold weird and cumbrous packages whose meaning is veiled by

[1] E. A. Burroughs, in *Christ our Redeemer*, 17.

an exterior unmeaningness. Then the festival-day arrives, with its whole succession of apocalypses. Heaven itself will prove like that; but even on earth it comes true that 'Thou, O God, hast laid up for those that love Thee such good things as pass man's imagining.' Elizabeth Barrett Browning tells us that heaven itself is largely made up of these deferred and hoarded gifts which God reserves,

> as a mother will toys
> Too costly, though given by herself,
> Till the room shall be stiller from noise,
> And the children more fit for such joys,
> Kept over their heads on the shelf.

Little children and great alike, we have our apocalypses and appropriate uncoverings of things which either are ours already or will be ours presently. This is, however, rather the unveiling of God's gifts than the unveiling of the sonship of those for whom the gifts are stored and designed; and when we speak of unveiling in this latter sense, we are thinking rather in terms of artistic life, such terms as we use when some beautiful picture or some piece of exquisite statuary is being exhibited for the first time. It is perhaps not quite easy for us to catch an artistic reference like this; for we are not an artistic people, any more than we are a musical people. The Greek, however, would have caught at this meaning at once, because he was artistically trained and lived in an artistic world. When Socrates in the *Republic* is trying to find out the nature of Justice and of Injustice, and setting them over against one another, Glaucon interrupts him: 'Heavens! my dear Socrates, how you do polish them up, just as if they were a couple of statues.' That could hardly have been said or imagined in England. But set a Greek to read Romans viii., and ask him what is meant by the apocalpyse of the sons of God, and he will conjecture that some statues of heroes or divine beings had been commissioned, and that they are to be exposed to view. We can understand as much as that; because we sometimes have a public function which consists of unveiling the statue of a single hero or statesman, with other heroes or statesmen to say in speech what the sculptor has been trying to say in stone.

2. What, then, is St Paul's conception of the disclosure that is going to be made as to the saints? It amounts to this—that the soul is a work of art, and that the world is a work of art, and that the invisible Artist is working out of sight behind a screen, or patiently laying colour upon colour in a studio which we are not allowed to enter. Now the strange fact about this work that is going on, during the time that elapses before the curtain is withdrawn from the panel or from the image, is that we really know nothing of the Artist, except by what we may call His disorders. We can hear the blows of His hammer and chisel; and every now and then we can see chips of marble—shapeless, meaningless chips—swept up and removed. We might think it was a chip-factory with a noise-factory attached; and yet every stroke has an intention, and every chip an intimate relation to perfection of form. Persons who are not to some extent in the secret will certainly draw wrong conclusions from their side of the screen. For they can see nothing beyond the chips. Even if they were allowed inside the screen, they would, for a long while, have the same feeling as to the aimlessness of the work. They would not perceive the secret form in the raw material which the sculptor uses. He is only chipping stone, for a good part of the process. Even when the work draws near to its completion, they will be subject to strange misunderstandings, supposing perhaps that the Artist is working unnecessarily slowly and is practically doing nothing. 'What have you done to your statue since yesterday?' asked someone of Michelangelo, of all artists the most passionately rapid. 'Oh,' he answered, 'I have altered that curve, and brought out that muscle which you see there.' 'But these are trifles.' 'Maybe, my friend, but I was working for perfection, and perfection, you know, is no trifle.' Just in proportion as an artist is working for perfection, he will become unintelligible to those who do not understand perfection or aim at it in their own workshops. Paul, however, had caught the artist's mind, and always talked of the spiritual life and the spiritual world in terms of perfectness. 'This is what we wish,' says he, 'namely, your perfection.' The benedictions, too, of the New Testament, are artist's benedictions: 'The God of peace make you perfect in every good work to do his will.' In the art-school of Jesus Christ they always say to one another, 'Let us go on to perfection, and leave the earlier stages behind us.' So,

when the unveiling day comes and heaven approves what has been doing on earth, with the great and final approbation that calls us good and faithful servants and blessed children of the Father, there will be reproduced one feature of Greek as well as of later artist-life. Here is a lovely form in purest Parian marble, with the ancient gloss on it that has almost turned stone to flesh, and hidden away in the corner are inscribed the words: 'Praxiteles made this.'

May our finished and perfected lives show a similar inscription: 'Jesus made me.' For certainly we are His workmanship—as St Paul says, His poem, His art-work.

¶ I have been reading Margaret Fuller's love letters. Sometimes the letters are light and frolicsome, glancing along the surface of things as a swallow skims the stream. At other times one is dropped sheer down into inconceivable depths. Here is a phrase which laid hold of me from these strange epistles. She is writing to the one she cared for and loved. 'May God refine you and chasten you until the word of your life is fully spoken.' 'The word of your life!' As though every life was purposed to be some articulated word, clearly and fully spoken. It is only another way of saying that life is ordained to be a distinct and distinguished poem, expressing in some altogether peculiar way the mind and will of God.[1]

Glorious Liberty

Rom. viii. 21.—'The glorious liberty of the children of God.'

THERE is a bell in Philadelphia, known as the bell of Liberty, which is gloriously linked with the birthday of a national life. It sounded out the glad and momentous tidings when a nation achieved its independence and breathed the air of freedom. When we turn to the life and letters of the Apostle we hear another bell of liberty, ringing out the glad tidings that a man has been born again, and that he has breathed the wonderful air of spiritual freedom. Here are a few samples of what we may call the bell-music in the Apostle's witness: 'Our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus'; 'The liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free'; 'Ye have been called unto liberty'; 'Free from the law.' 'Free from sin'; 'This liberty of yours.' In this way the music keeps breaking out in St Paul's speech and letters, the great bell-note which signalizes the attainment of spiritual freedom and independence, 'the glorious liberty of the children of God.'

1. There are few things more precious than liberty. Dan Crawford, in a book about the negro, says that what freedom gives to the slave is 'the blessed luxury of choice.' That is probably the aspect of liberty which appeals to us most strongly. We can express our views; we can choose our books, our companions, our way of spending leisure time. This is what a good many people mean by liberty. Even this is valuable. It gives us the chance at least of being ourselves, and of using our own minds.

But this is not, of course, what St Paul calls 'the glorious liberty of the children of God.' He himself had very little personal liberty. His days were full of exacting duties. He was often in prison. Yet he exulted in liberty. He had a secret which made him joyfully free even in a prison. It was 'the glorious liberty of the children of God.'

What was that liberty? Undoubtedly, it was the freedom to be himself. That is what freedom means for us all. But St Paul had made a great discovery about himself. He had discovered that by nature he was a child of God. That was what he was born to be. It was his true self. And with that discovery had come another. He found that he was not really free. Even with the liberty to do what he liked and to take his own way, he was not free to be himself—to be the child of God. He was bound and shackled by evil desires and habits. The sense of guilt had put a shadow between him and the Father. Pride and hate had infected his spirit so that he could not be a true brother to the rest of God's children. But Christ had set him free from these things. He had filled his heart with a new love for God and for men that broke all the inner chains. Love lifted the shadow between him and God with the mighty hand of forgiveness. He was free, free to live out in daily life the sonship that had been born within him.

This makes us ask the question whether we are really as free as we think. We may have plenty of liberty in the ordinary sense of the

[1] J. H. Jowett.

word. We may be able to please ourselves to the last detail. But are we free within? Are we free to live day by day in trust and obedience to the Father? Can we meet people all round us in the spirit of brotherhood without pride or hate or resentment? Are we always able to be that true, real self of which Christ makes us conscious?

¶ In one of the galleries of Florence stands a group of statuary by Michelangelo. It is known as 'The Prisoners,' for a peculiar reason. The works are less than half finished. The artist has done enough work on them to give us a glimpse of human figures emerging, as it were, from the marble; and from which it looks as if they were struggling to be free. But their struggle is in vain. They need the touch of the artist hand to bring them full release.

How much the world loses by our want of power to be ourselves. And how much of what we call sin is due to the effort to be free. It is the struggle for release, for freedom to be ourselves, finding expression in wrong ways, because the higher way is closed or because we are blind to our true good. A reckless prodigal is often a saint in bonds. The cynic is often a baffled believer. Most of the frictions that bring us up against others are the result of our own inward conflict. Even our strident condemnation of the weaknesses of others may only be the shadow of our own defeat, the hatred of a sin which we ourselves have not been able to overcome.

Now, for us all, the power of release is in Christ. That is the genius of His love—bringing deliverance to the captives. Being saved is being set free to become ourselves. Cases differ, of course. In some He uses a friend with knowledge and skill who can help us to understand the nature of our bondage, that we may take it to Him. The bonds may even break at the touch of the light that reveals them. But they go when we are sincere enough to face them and take them to Him. One tells, for instance, of a temptation that she had fought and fought till it seemed hopeless. 'One day,' she says, 'I became aware that I was clinging to the control of myself, and the question arose, "Could I give the control of myself into God's hands—even the control of the sin which I so greatly dreaded?" Sated with holding on, I gave Him control of my sin, and there came into my soul a newness and freshness of life I had not known before.' So others have found it happen with fear, with guilt, with selfishness and resentment. Only those who know this freedom can realize the relief that it brings. It is like the passing of some fever from which we emerge into health and sanity. It is 'the glorious liberty of the children of God.'

2. This freedom has another side. There is another kind of bondage that most people feel at times. It is the bondage of circumstances. Life can be very cramping. We have to spend our days in a dull kitchen or a dreary workroom. We have little chance to develop the gifts we feel we have. We may be crippled by ill-health. The world around us may be full of things that make us afraid, or threaten our security or even our life. St Paul knew all about this. The world opposed him, persecuted him, and at last put him in a prison. But he possessed in Christ, even here, the secret of a real freedom. For God's love had become the big power in the world. Nothing could limit his fellowship with Him. Nothing could keep him from doing His will or serving His purpose. Circumstances might limit his way of service, but they could not thwart his spirit of service. Trouble might threaten his comfort or even his life; it could not destroy his soul, or curb his joy. Even in a prison he was gloriously free. For that also was part of the Father's house. Death itself was only the opening of another door in the many mansions.

That is the wonderful freedom which Christ brings, if we let Him lead us into the full acceptance of God's love. In that love we are delivered from the power of every cramping thing to cripple or bind our spirit. Many of the freest souls have lived in very narrow places. Some of them have spent years in a sickroom. Some have known limitations that made the earth a kind of prison. But they had found escape into the eternal world of the love of God.

¶ Madame Guyon belongs to the singing fraternity of whom Paul and Silas are the patron saints, for many of her most beautiful spiritual songs were actually composed either in the Bastille or in the Castle of Vincennes; and speaking of her own experiences at such times, she says: 'I regarded myself as a little bird which you were keeping in a cage for your pleasure, who must sing to fulfil her condition

in life. The stones of my prison seemed like rubies; that is to say, I esteemed them more than earthly magnificence.' The actual hymn which she refers to begins like this:

A little bird am I
Shut from the fields of air,
And in my cage I sit and sing
To Him who placed me there,
Well pleased a prisoner to be,
Because, my God, it pleaseth Thee.[1]

Perhaps this is the freedom that some of us need. We are hampered by things that cramp our life, and we long to be free. If only we had a change of surroundings, different friends, fresh work, or more money, we would find freedom. So we think. But would we? So long as discontent or self-will controls our life, any place would be a prison. There is a way of freedom for us all. It is to see God's love and accept it fully. It is to cease to look on circumstances as a chain, and to make of them a channel of His grace to us and of our service to Him. His grace will be ours to meet all our need, and in His service we shall find the glorious liberty of his children.

¶ 'Some time ago,' says Dr Russell Maltby, 'a family came to live in the circuit where I was stationed, and I went to see them. There was a father, a mother, and a daughter. The daughter was an invalid, and it was pretty plain to anybody who saw much of her that she was not likely to be long in this world. Most of her time she spent on her back. It was not a very nice house to be ill in. The father was an atheist. He said there was no God, and he was very angry about it. (That always seemed to me to be very silly. What is the use of being angry with God for not existing?) The mother was what I might call a third-class Methodist. There was a good deal of argument in that house. I did what I could. I took some of my nicest friends and introduced them to the girl, to brighten her life a bit for her. In a couple of years, perhaps fifteen or sixteen of my friends were going there every week. They began to go to brighten her life. They continued to go because she brightened theirs. She had a kind of heavenly wisdom, and they took their problems to this girl, who knew so little about the world, but who knew so much about God. She seemed to have a kind of heavenly peace, lying there on her back, and she literally gave it away. They brought her flowers. Her giving was just as real, only she gave spiritual gifts. There must be quite a number of people who will never forget that girl as long as they live. She died. There was no reason for tears. I went back, and when I entered the pulpit I saw two people sitting together in a pew, which had not happened to them for many a long day, until she died. She brought them together, brought both back to God. Now, had not she a right to complain? You would have said so many a time. She would not let you utter one word of complaint on her account, and in the end you did not want to. Her influence spread. She gathered nourishment out of the soil in which she was planted, which was the very truth of God. She struck her roots deep. She drank in the sunlight. She grew until everyone who came near her was the better for it.'

[1] J. Rendel Harris, *Aaron's Breastplate*, 115.

The Pain of the World

Rom. viii. 22.—'For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.'

Let us admit that it is doubtful if any solution of the problem of pain is possible in our present stage of evolution: pain seems to be part of the general mystery of a universe which is too great for us to understand in our few years. We seem to hear the voice which Job heard out of the whirlwind, 'Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?'—there was no other answer to the complaints of the sufferer.

One thing, however, is sure: insensibility to the world's pain is the sign of a low and bounded nature. The suffering around us often seems unbearable: 'we hide, as it were, our faces from it.' But science forces us to realize the struggle for existence in both the animal and the human world. Christianity has quickened our unselfish powers. The tides of human pain and passion flow through many a heart. It seems as if the innocent are swept down more inexorably than the guilty, and to some there is the added suspicion of the justice of God.

Let us try to see, however, that pain is limited as far as may be, that it is utilized for the

driving back of evil, and that God is Himself the greatest sufferer.

1. Turn, first, to the sufferings of the animals. The Cartesian school held that animals are mere automata, which go through the outward forms of pain, yet feel none. It is difficult to think how intellectual men could thus delude themselves. Yet we should remember the alleviations of their sufferings. They have neither memory nor anticipation to create the imaginative world of pain peculiar to men.

¶ When Burns was ploughing, his coulter went crash into a mouse's nest, and the

> Wee, sleekit, cow'rin', tim'rous beastie,

started away with panic in its breast: straightway Burns moralises, and ends—

> Still thou art blest compar'd wi' me!
> The present only toucheth thee:
> But och! I backward cast my e'e
> On prospects drear!
> An' forward tho' I canna see,
> I guess an' fear!

We may take comfort to ourselves also in the idea that animals of prey so fascinate their victims at the moment of capture that they feel no pain. Livingstone, in his *First Expedition to Africa*, tells us that he felt none in a lion's grasp. 'The shock produced a stupor similar to that which seems to be felt by a mouse after the first shake of the cat. . . . This placidity is probably produced in all animals killed by the carnivora; and if so, is a merciful provision by our benevolent Creator for lessening the pain of death.' Again, the struggle for existence tends to bring the animal nearer perfection—giving swiftness, strength, quickness of the senses. The deliberate opinion of the great naturalist, Dr Russel Wallace, is that 'animals in a state of nature have an almost perpetual enjoyment in their lives.' 'Given the necessity of death and reproduction—and without these there could have been no progressive development in the natural world—it is difficult even to imagine a system by which a greater balance of happiness could have been secured.' And of the struggle for existence he says, 'It brings the maximum of life and enjoyment with the minimum of suffering.'

¶ God forbid that we should for such a reason slacken our efforts to prevent cruelty to them; but emphatically it is not true that

> the poor beetle, that we tread upon,
> In corporal sufferance finds a pang as great
> As when a giant dies.

A beetle does not feel so much as a rabbit; and a rabbit does not feel so much as a man; a slug dimly shrinks from 'pain' as it reacts to other stimuli—and it has a nervous system, which to a sponge would seem wonderfully elaborate but to us is surprisingly meagre. Even the lives of the higher animals must be subconscious to a degree that we cannot imagine. Let us not be complacent about it: the rabbit that is sometimes so brutally mishandled by men does suffer; but it is a comfort to know that his suffering is not of the same kind as ours would be.[1]

2. It is in the human world that the problem deepens. To us, as to the animals, 'painful sensations,' to quote Le Conte, 'are only watchful vedettes upon the outposts of our organism to warn us of approaching danger. Without these, the citadel of our life would be quickly surprised and taken.' But in man there enters in the moral element of pain.

However we may account for it, all experience shows that nothing refines character like suffering—when nobly borne. No man has ever touched the world to fine issues who has not himself passed through the fire. 'Ease and prosperity,' says Martineau, 'may supply a sufficient school for the respectable *commoners* in character: but "without suffering is no man *ennobled*."' Every highest form of excellence, personal, relative, spiritual, rises from this dark ground, and emerges into its freedom by the conquest of some severe necessity. In what Elysium could we find the sweet patience and silent self-control of which every nurse can testify? or the fortitude in right, which the rack cannot crush or the dungeon wear out? or the courage of the prophet, to fling his divine word before the wrath of princes and mocking of the people?' Thus suffering ennobles the sufferer.

¶ A biographer of Beethoven remarks: 'The lives of the great heroes were lives of one long

[1] Percy Dearmer, *Man and His Maker*, 37.

martyrdom; a tragic destiny willed their souls to be forged on the anvil of physical and moral grief, of misery and ill-health. They were made great through their misfortune. Because these mighty souls complained little of their unhappiness, the best of humanity is with them. Let us gather courage from them; for torrents of quiet strength and inspiring goodness issued from their great hearts. Without even consulting their works or hearing their voices, we read in their eyes the secret of their lives—that it is good to have been in trouble, for thence the character acquires even more greatness, happiness, and fruition.'

¶ In her experience all the richest and most valuable things were mixed up, somehow or other, with being hurt . . . and directly *from* being hurt, it seemed to her, sprang all the qualities she valued most, in others or in herself—courage; a measure of insight, and self-knowledge; and the secret sense of strength, of the indestructibility of the human spirit in the face of disasters, which is the most precious possession of all. All these things could only be had at a price, and cash in advance at that—the price of being hurt, again and again, and sometimes almost to the point of extinction.[1]

Pain also calls forth the sympathetic virtues—patience, sympathy, compassion. It seems strange that the most beautiful qualities of human nature are ones which would scarcely need to exist but for the misery and imperfection of the world. Certain it is that the principle, 'strength is made perfect in weakness,' underlies everything.

¶ Robert Louis Stevenson says in a letter to Mrs Sitwell: 'When I left you I found an organ-grinder in Russell Square playing to a child; and the simple fact that there was a child listening to him, that he was giving this pleasure, entitled him, according to my theory, as you know, to some money; so I put some coppers on the ledge of his organ, without so much as looking at him, and I was going on when a woman said to me: "Yes, sir, he do look bad, don't he? scarcely fit like to be working." And then I looked at the man, and Oh! he was so ill, so yellow and heavy-eyed and drooping. I did not like to go back somehow, and so I gave the woman a shilling and asked her to give it to him for me. I saw her do so and walked on; but the face followed me, and so when I had got to the end of the division, I turned and came back as hard as I could and filled his hand with money—ten to thirteen shillings, I should think. I was sure he was going to be ill, you know, and he was a young man; and I dare say he was alone, and had no one to love him.'[1]

3. Very often, again, suffering is simply the punishment for wrong-doing. Penalty is the reaction of the nature of things against its own violation. If we could trace the origin of all pain, disease, want, hunger, rags, melancholy, restlessness, discontent, insanity, we would find that by far the greater part came from moral wrong-doing somewhere—from the inhumanity of man to man. And it is just here that the true problem begins. Why is each individual not made to stand by himself—to receive the good or evil he has personally deserved? Think, however, what this would mean on the good side. How much of good have any of us earned by our own personal merits? Our whole life has come to us from the earnings of others. Social law and order, knowledge, science, art, education, ethical ideas, and great religious conceptions—whence did these come if not from that constitution of society which we call heredity? If we were condemned to possess nothing, mental, moral, spiritual, but what we personally earned and deserved, we would at one stroke lose that vast and unspeakable heritage. If the hereditary constitution of our race convey blessings for right conduct, it cannot but convey the opposite for wrong conduct. And it gives an awful weight and responsibility to the individual life when we see that it is so much more than individual—that it sends its good and evil far into the generations to come.

¶ Adam Bede, in George Eliot's story, re-echoes the testimony of every human being when he says, 'I've seen pretty clearly, ever since I could cast up a sum, that you can never do what is wrong without breeding sin and trouble more than you can ever see. It's like a bit of bad workmanship; you never see the end of the mischief it will do.' And how does the poet trenchantly put it? 'They enslave their children's children who make compromise with sin.'[2]

[1] Ann Bridge, *Peking Picnic*.

[1] *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*.
[2] J. Burr, *Studies on the Ten Commandments*, 36.

4. Many a mystery doubtless remains—as, for instance, the ultimate fate of those who seem to be mere victims of this hereditary system. Perhaps those who have every advantage of heredity and training will be more severely judged for some slight meanness than these poor victims for what we count great sins. As Francis Thompson says :

> Heaven, . . .
> Must of as deep diversity
> In judgment as creation be.

But there is no final comfort save in the very being of God. The most important statement that can be made is that God is the greatest sufferer—that He takes on His own heart the heaviest burden. He that has seen Christ hanging on the Cross, bearing the sin and suffering of the world, has seen what the Father was doing all the time, is ever doing. 'The Lamb was slain,' not simply some nineteen hundred years ago, but 'from the foundation of the world.' Having made it, He would see it through the great adventure—would shrink from nothing to bring the whole creation into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. That is the meaning of Love. Love suffers for those it loves—suffers, yet it is happy ; not to be allowed to suffer would be the unhappiness. Philosophers deny that God can suffer. They are right, in a beautiful way of which they do not dream. Even among ourselves perfect love transmutes suffering into perfect joy—as those know who have suffered for the sake of one they deeply loved. When we seek happiness for ourselves alone, the pleasure has a secret core of pain, restlessness, discontent. When Love carries us into suffering for others, it is joy, in proportion as the Love is deep and pure. And so when you get infinite Love, you may get infinite suffering, and the suffering will be infinite peace and joy. And that is God, and He is Himself the solution of the problem of pain. He is solving it by bearing it. And if life offers us opportunities of suffering for the good of others, let us remember it is God offering to share with us His own life.

> Could we but crush that ever-craving lust
> For bliss, which kills all bliss, and lose our life,
> Our barren unit life, to find again
> A thousand lives in those for whom we die.
> So were we men and women, and should hold
> Our rightful rank in God's great universe,
> Wherein, in heaven and earth, by will or nature,
> Nought lives for self—All, all—from crown to footstool—
> The Lamb, before the world's foundations slain—
> The angels, ministers to God's elect—
> The sun, who only shines to light a world—
> The clouds, whose glory is to die in showers—
> The fleeting streams, who in their ocean-graves
> Flee the decay of stagnant self-content—
> The oak, ennobled by the shipwright's axe—
> The soil, which yields its marrow to the flower—
> The flower, which feeds a thousand velvet worms,
> Born only to be prey for every bird—
> All spend themselves for others : and shall man,
> Earth's rosy blossom—image of his God—
> Whose twofold being is the mystic knot
> Which couples earth and heaven—doubly bound
> As being both worm and angel, to that service
> By which both worms and angels hold their life—
> Shall he, whose every breath is debt on debt,
> Refuse, without some hope of further wage
> Which he calls Heaven, to be what God has made him ?
> No ! let him show himself the creature's lord
> By freewill gift of that self-sacrifice
> Which they perforce by nature's law must suffer.[1]

Salvation and Hope

Rom. viii. 24.—'For we are saved by hope : but hope that is seen is not hope : for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for ? '

A BETTER translation of the text, though a less simple one, is, 'We were saved in hope.' The text does not tell us by what we were saved. It tells us of something involved in the salvation—hope is in the heart of it. Salvation is not exhausted in the initial experiences. It is fraught with happy consequences, the hope of which characterises all those who have been saved.

1. It has been objected that Christianity is not true, because it has not done what might have been expected of it. Christianity affirms that God sent His Son into the world, and that He died for our redemption. A tremendous fact like this should have tremendous effects. But the effects we see are small and paltry, not

[1] C. Kingsley, *The Saint's Tragedy*.

at all commensurate with the greatness of their alleged cause. Or the objection may be put in another way. We believe that the life and death of the Son of God is as necessary for the salvation of each individual as for the whole world. Can we not, then, imagine it being said to us with amazement, 'Do you really think that the effects in you justify belief in so tremendous an event as you affirm?' So doubt is thrown on the reality of the Christian facts and of our Christian experience. For is it not so that our unworthy lives make it difficult—not only for others but even for ourselves—to believe our Creed; and that worthier Christian lives would make it easier to believe in the Divine origin of Christianity?

¶ Bishop King of Lincoln declared: 'I am anxious to prove, if it please God, in my own life that the Gospels are true.'

And yet, in spite of all our sins and failures, we believe in the great facts of the Christian Creed. That our failures are real no one knows better than we do. We do not minimise them. We do not call them failures. They are sins. But forgiveness is as real as our sins. How, apart from the death of the Son of God on the Cross, is the wonder of forgiveness to be explained? How else in the inner world of our hopes and fears can we assure our heart of it, in face of the reproaches and convictions of our conscience? So, while admitting all that can be fairly said of the imperfection of Christian lives, yet by falling back on that experience of which Paul speaks when he says, 'we were saved,' we gain fresh courage to offer this salvation to all men as an experience which authenticates the Christian faith, and which gives the only solid basis for the hope that all sin and imperfection shall one day be done away.

2. It is in this experience of salvation that we have the secret of the Christian's hopefulness. What he has experienced is not a thing self-sustained and complete. It has implications on which it rests, and issues which run out into the time to come, and which all those who have been saved have a right to hope for. The facts which the Christian's experience of salvation implies, and the experience itself of this new relation to God, fill him with hope. Both these grounds of hopefulness, distinguishable but not separable, were before Paul's mind when he wrote, 'In hope were we saved.'

Christianity is consistent with itself in holding great hopes. The critic admits this when he says, 'With so great facts at its foundation, we are entitled to expect much, and we see little.' The Apostle affirms it, 'With so great facts at its foundation, we are entitled to expect much, and we shall see much.' 'If God be for us, who is against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things?' The argument is made to turn on the power, and love, and faithfulness of God. With Him there are no unfinished beginnings, no inadequate completions. He is not like the foolish builder, who without counting the cost lays foundations wide and deep, and cannot complete the stately tower for which the foundations were planned. When God has appointed Jesus Christ as the chief corner-stone, what will the superstructure be? We may meanwhile obscure the magnificence of His plan by the foolishness of our building. But though it be by the destruction of our work, His spiritual house shall be completed.

¶ In ancient times, when God delivered His people from the bondage of Egypt, what pledge did He give them? When Moses was afraid to take the word of hope to the Israelites, how did God encourage him? 'Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I will be hath sent me unto you.' 'I will be,' that is the name by which God would be known. 'I will be' what? It was for hope to fill it up. The promise was magnificent by its very vagueness. The children of Israel could fill it up in part by what they knew of God. 'I am the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob.' The promise of the name means that, and goes beyond it. The name is not 'I am,' a revelation of the self-sufficiency of God. It is 'I will be,' a promise of God's inexhaustible sufficiency through the future for all His people's need.

3. How many of us who profess to hold such hopes are holding them in expectancy? It has been well said that one of the most searching questions we can put to any one is, 'What do you expect?' What, then, are we expecting? We know by this time our capabilities and limitations. We have a shrewd idea of what we can, and cannot, do. For some, more sanguine, the horizon is perhaps not wider, but only less definite. In any case, the space between the

extreme limits of our fears and hopes is narrow. We may hope for success in that line of life which happens to be ours. We may hope for a competency, or even for wealth. But the limits beyond which we do not venture to hope are soon reached. We may hope to escape sickness and bereavement. We shall be singular indeed if we escape both. We may hope to live long. But the difference between the early death we deprecate and the longest life we dare hope for is small. And all such hopes, which are those that really influence so many of us—of success, of wealth, of social happiness, of long life—are bounded and shut down upon by death. The Christian has no more right than others to hope for wealth, or success, or long life. But, accepting here the limitations of his lot, he still hopes largely and confidently. He hopes that he is becoming, and will be made, like Christ in character and in usefulness. His hopes are not limited by death. He hopes that he shall pass through death to be with Christ.

¶ Over the grave of the first Bishop of Manchester is inscribed the one Greek word which in our English Bible is translated 'The trumpet shall sound'—a word which carries our minds forward to the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ, and utters forth the note of expectancy in the place where all hopes might seem to have died. Contrast with this Christian inscription what has been found written over the grave of a priest of the religion of Pagan Rome in its decay. 'He gave to his devotees,' such is the praise ascribed by the priest to the God he worshipped—'He gave to his devotees kisses and pleasures and fun.'

4. Such hopes, if we cherish them, will not put us to shame. Yet we speak of them so seldom and in such a manner as to suggest that we are afraid of being deceived by them, or of being reckoned enthusiasts if we avow our belief in them. And so the religion we profess fails to attract. If our religion be perturbed or paralysed by an uncertainty at its heart, if, lacking all the lift and gladness that a certain hope would give, it is a drudgery—if such be our religion, how can it attract any one? Who might not be attracted by it, if it were more manifestly a life drawn, and held, and made like to itself, by a great and holy hope? For, after all, the proof of Christianity lies largely in the lives of Christians—the proof of the facts on which it is based, and of the hopes to which it looks forward.

¶ We often wonder why our religion, even at its sincerest and best, remains so strangely uninfluential. We would fain induce our brethren to come with us on pilgrimage; but how to make our quest attractive to them, we know not. Nor is this the worst. What cuts far deeper is that we fail so largely to make that quest real to them—to convince them, even, that it is real to us. We tell them that we are followers of Jesus, that we are citizens of a Kingdom beside which all earth's empires are as nothing. They listen politely, but their courtesy cannot veil the lurking note of disbelief. Nor do they always listen politely; they sometimes fling back a challenge which, reflected as it is in popular literature, has become tragically familiar. 'Are you?' they say, in effect; 'then why can't we recognize it? If you really live in a rose garden, why don't you bring us a handful of roses? If you have spent years in listening to the nightingale, how is it that your voice has remained so strident? If you have stood upon the Mount of God, why does not your face shine? If you have been with Jesus, how come you to look so like the rest of us?' The challenge may be roughly voiced; it may be barbed with sheer malice; it may be flung at us by those who have the least right to make it. Yet, in itself, it is so entirely reasonable, so utterly irrefutable, that we dare not brush it aside as the shallow taunt of unspiritual cavillers. It is not inconsistency of life that is in question here. It is our strange inability to convey the beauty and savour, the overflowing vitality and sheer spontaneous delight, of true Christian discipleship; to infuse into those we meet something of its unfailing cheer, its deathless hope.[1]

What is the life worthy of the Christian hopes? It is the life these hopes themselves inspire. Hear what the Apostles say of it: 'Let us rejoice in hope of the glory of God'; 'If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.' 'We know that if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.' 'And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself even as he is pure.' The heart's possession by the Christian hope will show itself in patience and in joy, in the endeavour after purity, in

[1] E. Herman, *The Touch of God*, 145.

peace of conscience, and in a mind devoid of care. These are the inward, but not to be hidden, dispositions, which are at once its outcome and its evidence.

The Spirit's Partnership in Our Prayers

Rom. viii. 26.—'Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.'

The passage to which the text belongs is that in which Paul unfolds the various offices of the Holy Spirit toward believers; that he enters into their souls as the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, uniting them to Him and making them partakers of His life; that in the power of this new life they are freed from the law of sin and death, and enabled to walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; that He leads them as their guide; that He teaches them to cry to God, 'Abba, Father,' and so witnesses with their own spirits that they are the children of God; and that His work in them is the first fruits of their full and final redemption, a foretaste of its quality and a pledge of its certainty. Then he adds, 'Likewise also' (or after the same manner also) 'the Spirit helpeth our infirmity.'

Two facts stood clearly before Paul's mind: first, that the Christian in this world of ours never gets rid of conflict; and second, that the Christian need never be afraid of conflict, for he has a secret of power and endurance equal to all his trials and struggles, even the continuous help of the Holy Spirit.

¶ The word 'helpeth' is only used twice in the New Testament, the other passage being in Luke x. 40, where Martha begs the assistance of Mary to help her in the work she is doing—to share with her in serving. It is used a few times in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, and always with this same meaning; not to do something in place of another, but to share something with another.

In giving this encouragement of the ever-present aid of the Spirit in our weakness, the Apostle adds an illustration of it. And it is exceedingly striking that, in seeking an illustration of it, the Apostle thinks at once of the sphere of prayer. It shows his estimate of the place of prayer in the Christian struggle, that prayer is really 'the Christian's vital breath.' 'We know not what we should pray for,' he says, 'in each time of need'—according, that is, to the needs of each occasion. It is not lack of purpose, but lack of wisdom, that he refers to. We may have every desire to serve God, but do we know what we need at each moment? The wisest and best of men must fail here.

1. The view of prayer which is rapidly becoming obsolete for the modern mind is that which regards it as a purely verbal appeal to a Deity who is beyond us. One speaks in such prayer across just the same kind of gap as obtains between one individual and another. The request is left with another, and may or may not be answered, according to the other's will. Now, without denying in the least the infinite transcendence of God's Personality beyond our own, we nevertheless cannot think of God as so detached from His human offspring. The analogy of human *physical* relationship is too poor to serve us in this matter. It is *spiritual* relationship that we need to understand, and spirits, unlike bodies, are able to interpenetrate each other without loss of identity.

God is the element in which we live. As St Paul quoted with approval, 'In him we live and move and have our being.' This is the basal fact in the new view of prayer as a creative force. Prayer is never a merely verbal activity—or if it is, it is not real prayer. Even Shakespeare wrote long ago:

> Words without thoughts never to heaven go,

and to-day we are realizing more than ever before that 'thoughts are forces.' Prayer under such a view becomes what the New Testament in one of its deepest veins of teaching describes it as being, *the self-expression of Deity through the concentrated soul*. Again, to quote St Paul, 'the Spirit assists our weakness, for we do not know how to pray aright, but the Spirit pleads for us with sighs that are beyond words.'[1]

2. Prayer, whether intercessory or for ourselves, suggests to some minds the idea of an activity external to God, and affecting His action

[1] A. D. Belden, *The Harmony of Life*, 138.

by an influence not His own, precisely as the mythologists represent the heathen gods as wrought upon by the petitions of their votaries. We do well to reject such a notion. The New Testament idea of prayer is, that it does not originate in man, but in God. It is through His promptings that we are moved to pray. Our aspirations are first His inspirations. Whatever force there is in prayer is generated not by us, but by the Spirit of God. As the poet tells us:

> Prayer is the breath of God in man,
> Returning whence it came.

God is a partner with us in our prayers. He does not stand across the infinite gulf merely as a listener to our distant shouting. He does not wait as a royal personage until we draw near with awesome ceremony and lay all our desires before Him. God is a partner in the very making of our desires, and therefore He is a partner in our prayers.

¶ Too often when we speak of prayer we feel as though we are describing our own efforts to get into touch with a God who is very far away. Our whole view of prayer is changed when we see it as part of the deep silent work of God within us, to which we need to open up as generously and receptively and humbly as possible, content to be led and trained in it by God Himself.[1]

¶ An infinite God, the eternal Father, suffers more than you suffer in your sufferings. It would be easy to go off into discussion of an appropriate philosophical background for this apostolic teaching. Elaborate theories have been worked out to prove that the eternal Mind or Reason is organically involved in all the processes of our human thought; and so on. But the glory of the Christian message is to describe that relation of the infinite and the finite, in terms of personal fellowship. And in the doctrine of the Incarnation of the Son of God in Jesus of Nazareth a basis is laid for the picture which is given to us here of the relation of God with each of His children. The Spirit of God so takes His place as a partner in your inmost life that your very desires are His, and they are deeper in Him on your behalf than they are in yourself; and the prayers that are wrung from you even through tears—they are His prayers with groanings which cannot be uttered. So deep does God go into the life of each personality, so thorough is the Almighty's heart when it becomes a partner with the heart of a man.[1]

[1] Olive Wyon.

3. 'We know not what we should pray for as we ought.' This clause comprehends both the matter and the manner of our prayers; both what we should ask, and how we should ask it. And which of us is not conscious that the statement of the Apostle here is true? When James and John came to the Master during His earthly ministry, and desired that they should sit the one on His right hand, and the other on His left, in His Kingdom, He said to them, 'Ye know not what ye ask.' And when we come to read the conversation which He had with them at the time, we discover that they had no right ideas either of the nature of His Kingdom, or of the principle on which the honours of that Kingdom were to be bestowed, or of what would be involved in the granting of their request in the Kingdom. But, really, when we examine the matter carefully, it is just as true of each of us, in the simplest petition that we present, that 'we know not what we ask.' We may have a definite object in view, and we may think it good and most desirable; but we cannot see how the attainment of it would affect us, nor can we tell what may be required of us in the way of discipline and trial before it can be granted. We cannot tell whether the bestowment of it would be a blessing or the reverse; neither can we see by what means God may be pleased to answer our cry. In our shortsightedness, we may ask for things that would be anything but for our good; and so very often we find 'profit by losing of our prayers.' The very limitation of our faculties as finite beings makes it impossible for us to tell whether what we desire would be a blessing or a curse to us.

¶ It is a petty view of our Father's love and wisdom which demands or expects an answer according to our desires, apart from His wisdom. We see hardly one inch of the narrow lane of time. To our God eternity lies open as a meadow. It must seem strange to the heavenly people who have seen the beautiful End of the Lord, that we should ever question what Love allows to be, or ever call a prayer 'unanswered' when the answer is not what we expect; as

[1] D. Mackenzie, *Paternoster Sheen*, 47.

one of our baby songs says, 'Isn't No an answer?'[1]

So weak is man,
So ignorant and blind, that did not God
Sometimes withhold in mercy what we ask,
We should be ruined at our own request.

It is to this weakness and incompleteness of our desires and prayers that the help of the Spirit is directed. He strengthens our longings by His own direct operation. The more vivid our anticipations and the more steadfast our hopes, and the more our spirits reach out to that future redemption, the more are we bound to discern something more than human imaginings in them, and to be sure that such visions are too good not to be true. The more we are conscious of these experiences as our own, the more certain we shall be that in them it is not we that speak, but 'the Spirit of the Father that speaketh in us.'

4. The unuttered longings are sure to be answered. He that searcheth the heart knows the meaning of the Spirit's unspoken prayers; and looking into the depths of the human spirit interprets its longings, discriminating between the mere human and partial expression and the divinely-inspired desire which may be unexpressed. If our prayers are weak, they are answered in the measure in which they embody in them a divine longing. Apparent disappointment of our petitions may be real answers to our real prayer. Let us be thankful that we pray to a God who can discern the prayer within the prayer.

Christian Optimism

Rom. viii. 28.—'We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.'

Is this mere vague optimism on St Paul's part, or does it rest on a solid basis of fact? The optimist is sometimes too fond of indulging in vague sentimental generalities. He shuts his eyes to inconvenient facts while he repeats the unreal formula that everything is for the best in this best of all possible worlds. St Paul's assertion is far more precise than this: it is carefully limited and strictly defined. He does not, indeed, offer any arguments to prove it. Perhaps it was to him rather an intuition than an inference. At any rate, whether self-evident or derived from experience, he 'knows' that it is true. And not merely does he know this himself: those brethren at Rome to whom he is writing, though he is as yet personally unacquainted with them, know it also. 'We know,' he writes—we Christians know—'that *to them that love God* all things work together for good.'

Faith for a great mind like the Apostle's was not just a little sheltered patch of life illumined; it was a whole world standing in the light. It was not a little lamp that a man can carry about with him to light up his own concerns, and from which he can derive some little personal consolation: it was a whole world out of the shadows. To put it in another way. Faith for a mind like the Apostle's was not a selection from the facts of life, as though a man should emphasize all the bright and happy and hopeful things, and slur over the dark and tragic things. Faith for Paul was a controlling interpretation of everything. That is why he is so fond of that word 'all.' How often we get it in his letters. When he was writing to that poor church at Corinth, distracted and divided by its loyalties to different leaders and teachers, and, therefore, to different interpretations of the message, the Apostle himself breaks into that controversy by telling them that they were only claiming a part when all things were theirs; not only Peter, and Apollos, and Paul; but life, and death, and things present, and things to come. Everything was in their hands, because they belonged to Christ. In this chapter we have the same emphasis several times. 'He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?' Here, again, in the words of the text it is exactly the same note that is struck. 'We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.' Such is the sweep of the Apostle's mind.

1. 'All things work together for good.' St Paul is not saying here that every event and experience of life is good. Faith is not blindness to life's uncertainties and miseries. Indeed until faith in providence as mere beneficence

[1] Amy Carmichael, *Rose from Brier*, 155.

breaks down, we cannot have this faith which reconciles us to God in face of every conceivable evil. But, having that, nothing whatsoever in the world is omitted from what works together for good. This does not, however, mean that all life is forthwith made happy or in any way good in itself. Creation still groans and travails, and those who have God's peace in their souls share in its pain. We are all ready to admit that health and prosperity and youth and friendship and good success are on our side. But the claim here is that they are not a whit more friendly to our lasting good than the most painful, most uncertain, most calamitous events. This was the victory which overcame the world, and, as it left nothing that could be against us, it manifestly was a crowning triumph. The change is so great that all things become new. The world is a new creation. Yet the only really new element is the discovery of God's unchanging meaning in it and purpose with it. It is new only as a lesson is new when it ceases to burden us as a task and begins to stir our imagination as poetry, or as a message is new when, read by the right code, it changes from chaotic words to rational meaning.

Nor does this mean that there are no evils to be shunned. Still less does it mean that there is nothing to be altered and nothing to be opposed. Nor does it deny that we live under a system which works out general consequences affecting equally saint and sinner. There is an appalling impartiality in life. The Preacher in that most pessimistic book in the Old Testament, puts it: 'All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked. . . . This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that there is one event unto all.' So it looks. Birth and death, joy and sorrow, sickness and health, love and loss, happiness and tragedy—no respecters of persons—come to each regardless of his character and his response. As Jesus said in His parable, one man builds a house on sand and another on rock and then the same thing happens to both—the rains descend and the floods come and the winds blow. All things come alike to all. But in the end one house has gone. Things do not come *out* alike to all. Some souls go to pieces; some souls have something in them which lasts.

¶ Two families each lost an only son, one the family of a minister and the other a worldly family. A little boy of twelve years talking to his mother about it said, 'Mother, it isn't so hard on the minister and his wife, for they know what to do. But these other people don't know what to do.' The little fellow had put his finger on the crux of the matter. He saw the same event falling on two families, each with a different result. Because in the one case *they knew what to do.* We cannot determine what happens to us, but we can determine what it shall do to us after it does happen.'[1]

2. 'To them who are the called according to his purpose.' If it takes a heroic effort of faith to believe that all things work together for any one, how much more difficult is it to believe that they work for those who are devoted to the highest. Surely the nobler and greater and more spiritual the purpose, the worse do things serve those who pursue it. Socrates was rewarded with a cup of poison, Dante with exile, the inventor of printing with being thought in league with the devil, the founder of modern science with imprisonment as a heretic, and many pioneers of freedom with the scaffold or the stake. Many have had the same experience as Paul himself. For what he wrought with his hands some kind of meagre living-wage was accorded him, but for what he wrought with his mind and heart he had only vituperation and stoning and imprisonment and finally martyrdom. Above all, how did things work for Him whom, on Paul's view, it ought to have served best of all? He had nowhere to lay His head and was despised and rejected. His final payment was the Cross—a shameful, agonizing, appalling execution as a criminal. Yet, in face of all this obvious loss of worldly advantage, the Apostle maintains that the world belongs to those who have a definite sense of a call to a Divinely appointed task—that all of it works for their good.

A call according to God's purpose is not an exclusively Christian experience. Every prophet had it, and no greater accounts of it exist than those given by Isaiah and Jeremiah. It is not even limited to the Bible. Where any one is brought to realize that his own purpose in life is nothing, and is led, regardless of loss or trouble or human disapproval, to follow a higher, we may not deny that there is a call of God. But the Apostle's call was through Jesus Christ: and it was the same with those to whom

[1] E. Stanley Jones, *Victorious Living*, 236.

he spoke. Before Him, God's call had been limited to a few great and specially endowed souls, and only for unusual and conspicuous tasks, mostly at some great crisis in human affairs. But in Christ the call came to all kinds of humble Christian folk to serve God's high purpose in all kinds of common ways. Yet Christ's call embraces all things, not because it is lower, but because it is higher than any other. No purpose could be higher than to be God's son in whom He is well pleased, nor any life greater than that which manifests the Father. But a light set in the heavens is not thereby set apart from us. On the contrary it is thereby made available for all. It is not like a light-house by which you can only steer great ships, but like the pole-star by which the wayfarer in the valley and the shepherd on the hill can guide their steps. Select souls we may not be able to be, but the higher purpose of being sons of God we all can have.

What the Apostle says he knows is that those who are thus called are the people who possess the world, and find all things in it work for good. On a superficial and immediate judgment this is obviously quite untrue. The higher your aim, the more difficult it is to get life to work for it, and the more all the powers of the world and of society are massed against it. To be called, with the unwavering devotion which alone is God's call, to serve truth and beauty and holiness, which alone is God's purpose, will make us more likely to be poor than rich, to be hated than approved, to be despised than praised.

But only the very thoughtless can take life at its face value. Reflection challenges all our hasty judgments, and more particularly about those who make the most of life. Are they so certainly those who are most efficient in winning the world's material rewards? Do they fill the heart's deepest needs? And, on the contrary, do those who are called according to God's purpose so certainly draw blanks in life's lottery. Is aspiration, or hope, or inward peace, or the sense of God's approval, or any spiritual issue no compensation for loss and pain and long delay? Why did the Greatest, whom outwardly life served worst, think that in His hard life and shameful, terrible death, He manifested a Father who numbers our hairs, frees us from care and enables us to set all fears at defiance?

¶ Galsworthy has a short story, *The Hedonist*, in which he describes a man he met on one of his visits to a Southern city. The hedonist is such a man as can be discovered in almost any social circle—selfish, cynical, luxurious, and indifferent to the higher values of life. In the story Galsworthy tells of sitting in a famous garden of the city, while the man passes, just beyond a hedge, unseen and unseeing, talking of himself and exhibiting his beliefs to a young woman upon whom whatever affection he has seems to be settled. Spirit, for him, he says, is only the refined side of sensual appreciations. When his senses fail he will simply fade out. Then the man, Vaness by name, and the young woman with him, walk on, and an old Negro gardener comes by. Galsworthy observes to him that this is the most beautiful place in the world, and the gardener replies that, in the Civil War, Sherman's troops almost burned the old house, and were powerfully angry with the old master because he had hidden the silver before he went away. He tells how his own father, a Negro slave in the old house, had been taken before the Major and ordered to confess where the silver was hidden. His father had told the Major that they could do what they liked with him, but he wouldn't tell; he wasn't going to act Judas. The soldiers threatened to shoot him. They tied him to a tree and shot all round him in order to frighten him into telling where the silver was, but they didn't get a word out of him. 'And suddenly,' Galsworthy writes, 'there came before me Vaness' well-dressed person . . . and beside him, by a freak of vision, stood the old darkie's father, bound to the live oak, with bullets whistling past, and his face transfigured. There they stood alongside—the creed of pleasure . . . and the creed of love devoted unto death!

'"Aha!" I thought, "which of the two laughs last."'[1]

3. 'To them that love God.' As we reflect, we must have some doubts of the real value of selfish success. How often what is selfishly earned is hurtfully spent, what is selfishly hoarded a burden of anxiety, what is selfishly enjoyed mere food for ever more insatiate desire! It does not require very profound reflection to see that no merely external judgment can measure life's most valuable blessings. On no other matter is the danger of indulging in

[1] J. M. M. Gray, *Concerning the Faith*, 13.

platitude quite so great, yet it is not a platitude that the soul lives by vision of the truth and is enriched by the gentle and gracious and beautiful things of character.

At times when we are sensitive and sore, we have been tempted to think that nothing equips for the battle like hardness of heart. Yet it is not the rigid bough which weathers the storm, nor the granite cliff which encroaches upon the sea, nor the heart hardened to bone which stands the strain of living. On deeper reflection do not the hard hearted miss all that is best? Is it not just the love to God, which loves all He seeks and all for whom He seeks it, that is the one supreme condition for getting out of life its highest good? And surely love alone can face all experience, making no selection from it of what is easy and pleasant and profitable, but finding also pain and conflict and death itself turned by its own alchemy to serve its own uses. This the Apostle says we know. Knowledge seems a strong expression for our faltering, dubious, broken trust that somehow the highest is the surest. But he too admits that it is fragmentary, like a blurred image in a mirror of rusty steel. And he more frequently speaks of it as faith, a mount of vision up which knowledge climbs with trembling steps. Yet, then, he says still more boldly, We see. Faith is never to him a mere exalted state of feeling, a mere emotional persuasion, but is always insight into the world as God has actually made it and the real purpose for which He uses it. Faith works by love. But this does not mean love as an emotion. It means that love is life's deepest reality. When we know the great purpose love has called us to, and accept it as our own, and are at one with God in seeking to realize it, we know also that no trial or difficulty or distress or aught the world can bring against us can ever shake our confidence that love directs our whole life toward that high end and can justify all it ever required us either to suffer or to do.

The Charge of God's Elect

Rom. viii. 29.—'For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.'

In *Paradise Lost* two passages stand in curious contrast. When Milton tries to imagine angels at leisure, he tells us that the unarmed youth of heaven 'exercised heroic games.' Elsewhere he describes how fallen spirits 'entertained the irksome hours': they sat on a hill retired,

> and reasoned high
> Of Providence, Foreknowledge, Will, and Fate—
> Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute—
> And found no end, in wandering mazes lost.

This contrast, which is certainly not without design, strikes almost a modern note. Nowadays we glorify athletics; on the other hand, we are ready to abandon the problem of predestination for lost minds to argue over. To us it appears like a labyrinth, wherein the wisest men have missed their way. Yet that problem is as ancient as religion. It involves the crux of philosophy as well as of theology. It belongs to the categories of thought by which we reason, quite as much as to the faith by which we live.

1. 'For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate.' It was an awful doctrine which our fathers found in these words: that a privileged few were foreordained from all eternity to enjoy the favour of God and the bliss of heaven for ever, and that all the rest, the vast majority, were created and sent into the world with their terrible destiny fixed by unchangeable decree, predoomed to reprobation and everlasting pains. It seems inconceivable to us that such a thought of God could be held, as it was, by good and tender-hearted men who had sat at the feet of Jesus, and seen the pity and the love in His eyes.

¶ 'As a boy,' writes Dr Garvie, 'I remember meeting men and women over whom the dark shadows of the doctrine of election fell. One of the most saintly women I ever knew said shortly before her death: "If I perish, I perish at His Blessed Feet."'

Whatever St Paul meant, we feel that he could not mean that, and even if he did we should not follow him. We should hold to the justice and mercy of God, in spite of all. But what the great Apostle had in mind was something vastly different from that. He declares here that God, from the first, had a vision of a nobler race of men, who would be sons of God indeed, who would be chosen and called to share the mind of Christ and be His witnesses

among men. God, who foresaw and predestined the Incarnation, the gift of His well-beloved Son to the world, and that life of spotless purity and matchless sorrow, foresaw and predestined also that there should gather round the Christ men after His own heart, swayed by the same purpose, so that He, the great Forerunner, should be as the Firstborn among many brethren. That was what God foreknew and determined long before it came to pass—that there would be loyal and obedient hearts who would yield to the claims of Jesus, and take up the cross with Him, and follow Him in the service of self-forgetting faith, and in the service of humanity. God foreknew them, and when the time came He called them out, and endowed them with the Spirit of the Master, and sealed and equipped them for their appointed work. *That* is St Paul's idea of election, and the Divine idea of election which runs through all the sacred writings.

The purpose of the predestination was to shape men in the image of Jesus Christ, for toil and work and patient endurance in this world, and to bestow upon them spiritual gifts and graces, that they might labour and suffer for, and guide and lead, their fellow-men as He did. 'Predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ.' And we know what that means. The image of Christ is ever before us! The Man of toil and long-suffering, the Man of meekness, pity, and forgiveness, the Man whose heart was a fountain of love, the Man who made Himself the servant of all, and stooped under every burden, and drank every bitter cup, that He might be the world's Healer and the Saviour of the lost. To make men of that kind is the purpose of God's electing choice. There is no Divine partiality there, but Divine love calling out men to do the works of love, and enriching them with noble gifts that they may undertake high responsibilities.

¶ Election has been thought of as an election to mere favour. Men were called, they thought, to mere bliss, pleasure, security, delight. That is a travesty of the doctrine of election. There would be no grumbling at election if they knew what election means. Is it not an election into the life of Christ, into the purity, the cross-bearing, the great redemptive service of Christ? The elect of God are an army, a body of men, and Christ is the great Captain of that body. He has got a difficult position of the enemy to take—He has to redeem a lost world—God sent His Son to be Captain of the Lord's host, that body of men and women, and the devil's citadel He has to take, and the elect are they who are called to join a forlorn hope, to go and storm a Redan. Yet it isn't a forlorn hope—there is victory! But it is an election to the cross.[1]

2. We are sometimes afraid of these words 'election' and 'predestination.' We have almost dropped them out of religious speech. But the thing itself is an immense practical reality. Serious men recognize that the facts which determine their own lot in life have been chosen for them. We do not select our race, or our colour, or our speech, or our native soil. Each man's temperament and training and traditions, his home and his kinsfolk, are foreordained and predetermined by his Maker. The Bible declares that the God who remembered us and loved us before we knew father and mother has beset us behind and before and laid His hand upon us from the moment we first drew breath. Each separate soul has its place in the mysterious election of Eternal Love.

'Who maketh thee to differ from another, and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?' That question pierces below the differences which separate man from man, and class from class, and nation from nation. We are learning through the lips of unexpected teachers how it is that we have come to possess the best things which we count as our own. Those distinctive points about us, which we take pride in because they mark us out and lift us up above our fellows, belong to us not by any merit of ours but simply by God's appointment. They are not like wages which we earn: they are sheer gifts which we inherit, according to His unsearchable will. And, being God's free gifts, they become a solemn and sacred charge. Herein our privilege is the measure of our responsibility. Whatever grace or privilege or power we possess, we hold it as stewards and trustees.

For one star differeth from another star
In glory and in use; and all are stairs
Of the illimitable House of God;
And every one has its own name and place

[1] J. L. Paton, *John Brown Paton*, 371.

Distinguished, and some special word is given
For each to utter in the mystic song

. . . . .

. . . that grows fuller, clearer, as we grow
Nearer to God.[1]

3. Election means choice. God does call us out, and set us apart, and make us to differ one from another. But here is part of the reason of His mysterious choice. He elects us just as a captain picks out soldiers for some special service. He clothes and equips us for some special duty. He arms us against some special foe. He enriches us for some special charity. By the discipline of life He trains us to fulfil our appointed calling. So it was with that Apostle concerning whom the Lord said: 'He is a vessel of election unto me, to bear my name before the nations, and I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.' St Paul had great gifts already, but he had to be subdued by great sorrows until he became a vessel purified and fit for the Master's use. Each vessel of election is shaped out of mortal clay by the Divine Hand, and tempered and annealed in the furnace of suffering, to the end that it may fulfil the uses of a cup and carry living water to souls that perish with thirst. God has chosen us, in order that we may serve.

¶ 'Wherefore,' says the greatest of the Stoics, 'the wise and good man, remembering who he is, and whence he came, and by whom he was produced, has no end but to use his life with due obedience to God. Dost Thou still wish me to exist? I will exist. Hast Thou no further need for me? I thank Thee and obediently depart. Set me down where Thou wilt, do with me what Thou choosest: I have no will but Thy will. Let such thoughts be ever nigh you, by day and by night; write them and read them, keep speaking of them, meditate upon them, ask every one you meet to help you nearer them. For that is the real end of life.'

O Love, who ere life's earliest morn
  On me Thy choice hast gently laid;
O Love, who here as Man wast born,
  And wholly like to us wast made;
O Love, I give myself to Thee,
Thine ever, only Thine to be.[2]

[1] H. E. H. King, *The Disciples*, 110.
[2] J. Scheffler.

The Apostolic Doctrine of Election

Rom. viii. 30.—'Whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified and whom he justified, them he also glorified.'

In this text and many Pauline statements which resemble it, extraordinary emphasis is laid upon the supreme agency of God in the salvation of men. Language is used which has at least the appearance of implying that God is so much the author of religion, so exclusively the origin and moving impulse of our experience as Christians, that no place remains for what man may do or leave undone. We seem to be taught the passiveness of man and the sole activity of God. Human choice and human feeling seem to merge in the irresistible and all-embracing Divine purpose, as the transient and unconscious ripple is merged in the vast sea.

The dangers of such a representation no one will question. It is easy to deduce from it uncompromising doctrines of election and fore-ordination which go near taking the edge off the warnings and exhortations of Scripture, bidding men fight against sin and strive after holiness. If God does all and man is unable to do anything; if God fills earth and heaven, eternity and time, while before Him man shrinks into an insignificant portion of the endless whole; what can be the use of prayer or thought or conflict? Are they not discounted in advance? For we know beforehand, do we not, that that alone can happen which God has appointed, only those be saved whom it is God's will to save?

Yet it is noticeable that the elements in the traditional view of Divine election by which men have been repelled are not its positive but its negative aspects. Religious men have not found it hard to acknowledge that all our good, all our blessing and achievement, is traceable to the love of God. The immovable axiom on which all believing assurance rests is the conviction that salvation, in its beginning, middle, and end, is the work of God's free, unbought compassion. Every Christian knows, as it has been put, 'that it is God who saves, and that when He saves it is not by accident, or to reward human merit, but in virtue of His being what He is—a God who is eternally and unchangeably Redeemer.' This is truth born out of personal experience; it is truth that

spontaneously arises in the Christian consciousness when at any time it proceeds to give itself an account of its own situation. Indeed, let the sense of redemption only be quickened, and the feeling of sin become vivid and overpowering, and at once the certainty of God's choosing and saving grace leaps into the forefront of the mind, and swallows up every other thought. In such an hour the soul has eyes only for what God does, all the experiences of redeemed men being instinctively thrown into the passive voice, as in the familiar words:

> Chosen not for good in me,
> Wakened up from wrath to flee,
> Hidden in the Saviour's side,
> By the Spirit sanctified.

On the other hand, the note of certainty which is so conspicuous in this positive doctrine of election is entirely absent from the negative doctrine of reprobation, or the tenet that some men are unconditionally barred out from salvation by God's pre-temporal decree. For the doctrine of reprobation there is simply no ground in experience at all. It is one thing for a Christian to believe that God chose him in Christ before the foundation of the world; for here he is but putting into explicit words the immediate assurance that he is being saved by 'a redeeming mercy which is older than the world' and has had no beginning. But where is the man who can plead his own experience for the view that God, from the first, designed some people to be lost for ever? Where is the man who can affirm, *out of his own experience*, that God has shown him that he is the object of a Divine hate which is older than the world, and that his salvation is for ever rendered impossible by obstacles inherent in the Divine will? It is an idea which can barely be expressed in words. Let us recollect, therefore, that while the positive doctrine of election by grace has a glorious and indefeasible place in the Christian creed, because it springs naturally and spontaneously out of the experience of redeemed men, on the other hand the negative doctrine of eternal reprobation has no place there, and can only be introduced by an illegitimate and presumptuous use of narrow and abstract logic.

¶ J. G. Whittier's old friend, Joshua Coffin, who had been so kind to him in his boyhood, held the doctrine of Predestination as taught at that time, and one day Whittier said to him: 'Joshua, don't thee hate God who has doomed thee to everlasting torment?' 'Why, no, it is for the good of all that some are punished.' 'Joshua, thee has spent thy life doing good, and now thee is of course getting ready to do all the hurt thee can to thy fellow-men!' 'No, indeed, my feelings have not changed in the least in this regard.' 'Thee is going to hell then in this mood?' 'Why, yes, I am reconciled to the will of God, and have no ill feelings towards Him or my race.' 'Now, Joshua, thee is going to hell with a heart full of love for everybody, what can the devil find for such a one as thee to do?' The good man laughed at the idea of the puzzle Satan would be in to find occupation for him, and his depression passed away.[1]

Furthermore, if we thus concentrate our minds on the positive aspect of predestination—which is that salvation begins with God, and begins in eternity, and that in the realization of its purposes there can be no break-down—we understand in some degree the unspeakable consolation derived from this doctrine in many ages by men of God, as well as its influence, which we know to have been profound, in producing moral heroism of the noblest type. The conviction that God had chosen them in His everlasting love, and that nothing could separate them from their Redeemer, enabled these tried men and women to endure. Nothing can go beyond such a faith, and in times of need it is the only ground which we feel does not shake under our feet.[2]

1. *Every man's life is a plan of God.*—It is a great thing for a man to believe that he is where God means him to be; but it is a greater thing for him to believe that, in order to put him where he is, God has been shaping all his past, and that He was even thinking of him and planning for him before he was born.

> Ere suns and moons could wax or wane,
> Ere stars were thunder girt, or piled
> The heavens, God thought on me, His child:
> Ordained a life for me.

[1] Jane T. Stoddart, *The New Testament in Life and Literature*, 290.
[2] H. R. Mackintosh, *Life on God's Plan*, 43.

There is no thought which a man can take with him into his life-work that can steady and strengthen him like that. The sense that our past has been deliberately shaped by Divine fingers, that God has not only put us where we are, but made us what we are, securing for us privileges and opportunities of birth and education, putting us through special experiences and disciplines, bringing us within the circle of certain friendships and affections, not only watching but moulding the events of our lives, and bringing us, to our astonishment, face to face with a situation in which we are compelled to acknowledge that He is confronting us Himself: that is the greatest moment of our lives, when all this comes home to us. It fills us with awe; we are sure that we are in a mysterious Presence, and that the grasp of a Divine Hand is upon us.

Those who have been thus led to feel in some solemn hour that the hand of God has shaped their past and that the voice of God is calling them, may go forward with quiet and fearless hearts to the work that is theirs to do, strong in the assurance that the God who called them will also sustain them, and that in no conflict or crisis will they ever be alone.[1]

¶ There is no doubt that this dogma of a personal calling is a great consolation, and is a great truth. Looking at the masses of humanity, driven this way and that way, the Christian teaching is apt to be forgotten that for each individual soul there is a vocation as real as if that soul were alone upon the planet. Yet it is a fact. We are blinded to it and can hardly believe it, because of the impotency of our little intellects to conceive a destiny which shall take care of every atom of life on the globe: we are compelled to think that in such vast crowds of people as we behold, individuals must elude the eye of the Maker, and be swept into forgetfulness. But the truth of truths is that the mind of the universe is not our mind, or at any rate controlled by our limitations.[2]

2. *Man must respond to God's purpose.*—God is indeed ever mindful of His children, and that care does not begin at birth. The infinite tenderness of the Father's heart as revealed by Jesus was no afterthought, but was characteristic of God from all eternity. But we must not interpret this in such a way as to make it difficult to understand human freedom, to make men ready to attribute their misdeeds to some Divine power which from all eternity appointed them to a sinful path. Fortunately we are all judged by a Higher Judge than any earthly judge, but, while we make every allowance for ourselves and for others, we have to acknowledge that by wilful choice men have gone in the ways of darkness rather than in the ways of light, and that nations have allowed themselves to be captivated by false thoughts which led to an inevitable Nemesis. The nations might have changed their ways before they plunged into the abyss. Individuals may turn to God before they bring upon themselves the harvest of wrong-doing. Man is free, gloriously free, to make or mar his life, to make the terrible choice between good and evil, and there is nothing in the New Testament thought of God's omniscience to contradict this vital principle of morality.

God has no favourites. Everybody alike is subject to Him and responsible to Him. In the same voice He speaks to us and the same results follow upon obedience and disobedience. We cannot presume upon God's favour or forgiveness. 'Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.' 'God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.'

3. *There is a message of hope.*—A man may regretfully mourn the past which cannot be recalled, but even he can find hope in this text. He may have failed, but God does not fail and God in His love is prepared to take the repentant man and lead him in the coming days in the paths of righteousness.

And if into the midst of our cherished plans there often steals the intruder—adverse circumstances, ill-health, misfortune which makes our dreams impossible—the consolation which comes to the Christian is that no blind fate has thrown a barrier upon the pathway and no unjust power in the heavens has dashed to pieces the edifice which was being erected. Behind the fluctuations of circumstances and the mysterious disappointments of life there is a Father who in love directs our ways. Through our lives God

[1] J. E. M'Fadyen, *The City with Foundations*, 117.
[2] Mark Rutherford, *Deliverance*, 63.

is working His purposes out, and the aims we cherished, while they seemed free from alloy did not fall in with that more beneficent purpose of the All-wise one, and in His love for us and for the world of men He has seen fit to refuse us the fulfilment of our dreams. To remain with faith unabated in the midst of such an experience demands of us quiet and simple trust in the loving providence of God, and, if we are to live our lives with as few disappointments as possible, we can do so only if by every means in our power we search for knowledge of God's plan and purpose for our lives and endeavour to build only according to His good pleasure.

God will show us the way, and if we are ever in doubt there is one sure test. Having discovered as well as we can the spirit of the Master, and remembering that wherever He went He walked by the way of the Cross, if we strive to do what we believe He would have done had He been with us, then we shall have reason to believe that this is the way of God's appointing.

Hath He marks to lead me to Him
If He be my Guide?
In His feet and hands are wound-prints,
And His side![1]

Our Response

Rom. viii. 31.—'What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?'

That question faces us every day. Things happen to us, and we make some response to them. We take up some attitude to them. Some of them we resent; some we welcome; some we resist; some depress us. It is a very useful thing occasionally to note what effect these things have had on our minds, and how we have met them. What have we said to these things?

It is a very important question, because the effect they have upon us, and the attitude we take to them registers itself within, making us what we are. It also produces an effect on the world in which we live. The real difference between two people is not in what happens to them, whether they are rich or poor, whether they are fortunate or unfortunate, whether they have sorrow to meet or life flows on like a sunlit stream that never ruffles the surface of their days. It is in the way in which they respond to these things. Put one man in prison unjustly, and he eats out his heart in resentful solitude till his soul becomes bitter and dark. But put St Paul or John Bunyan there, and the solitude becomes a spur to his imagination and an immortal book is born. Sorrow makes one man hard; it makes another equally soft and tender. One who has suffered will tell you how unjust the world is. Another will tell you how in his suffering he came to know the comforts of God as he had never known them when life was undimmed by a tear.

It all really depends on the response which each one makes to what meets him, and that is in our own hands. Most people forget this. We become so accustomed to meet things in certain ways—as automatic as raising our arm to ward off a threatened blow—that it does not occur to us that there may be a better way. When life puts something up to us we must do more than *react* in a mechanical way; we must *respond*. That takes our spiritual contribution in.

¶ There is a story of a man who was paralysed, hopelessly crippled, an object of pity to all who met him. Someone once remarked to him sympathetically 'How your affliction must colour your life!' 'Yes!' he replied, 'but I chose the colours.'

1. There are those who say to these things, 'whatever happens is the will of God,' and they preach the doctrine of submission. This doctrine of submission to the will of God has been preached to slaves and the victims of all sort of tyrannies. Men have been told to see in all calamities the judgments of God. One might well ask where would the advocates of such a view stop? Would they say to the man who has been swindled that he has been swindled by the will of God? This is not the teaching of St Paul, nor is it that of his Master. Christ would not allow that those eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell had been sinners above others; He would not call that event an act of God's. It was very probably the result of the fact that some builder scamped his work!

It will not do to blame God for the results of man's wickedness, cruelty, and folly. Human

[1] A. Chisholm, in *The Christian World Pulpit*, cix. 82.

freedom is a fact, and sometimes a terrible fact. War, and sweating, and fraud are the fruits of the misuse of that freedom, and they work havoc in human affairs. But we must realize that these things which are due to the misuse of freedom have only a limited power. They pervert the course of things, but they do not defeat God. Behind them God remains—an eternal force making for good. They come and go, but His love remains, urging towards life.

¶ Dr Miller tells of a heart-breaking experience which came to him in his work in Nigeria, when a little community of Moslem Christians was wiped out by sleeping sickness. 'In our suffering and sorrow at this calamity there was rebellion in our hearts. Could not God have spared this? Had He not called, and saved, and purified this little community for service to Him? And here was Evil, black, cruel Evil, triumphant.

How slowly we learn the strength of the entail of sin! How slow are we to realize that so much of God's good creation has been reduced to suffering and infirmity thus; and, above all, that He Himself in it all is the greatest sufferer for the sin of His children, which in the Incarnation He has shared. It was long before I could say: "Thy will be done." *Not* the passive acquiescence in the results of carelessness, and dirt, and consequent disease; *not* the attributing to God of the consequences of sin through the ignoring of His holy, healthful, happiness-bringing laws; but the determination that His will *should* be done through and in us; and that suffering and disease should be conquered—through education, hygiene, discipline, and war to the knife on the trinity of evil—dirt, ignorance, and superstition; until in Christ the kingdom of righteousness and joy and peace would come.'[1]

If we ought not to blame God for all the troubles that come to us, let us be quite sure that always God comes with the troubles if we will but let Him. He is always in every situation. And so what the chance happenings of this world shall really effect in us depends upon whether or no we face them with God, whether we allow God to be a partner in our lives. 'If God be for us who can be against us.' If we let God come into all the things which happen, even the sad and painful things, He will bring some real good out of them. He can make suffering bring forth beautiful effects, and poverty yield a noble self-possession, and the slander of man a wonderful forgiveness. And so even out of the whole set of facts and circumstances, some of which may be superficially very bad, God brings some really good result. The man who wrote these words had had an amazingly large share of bad luck. He had had illnesses and persecutions and poverty and slander and loneliness in his life. Yet he meant what he said, because he had lived with God.

¶ I can only tell you what I have felt to be the only thing which makes life endurable at a time of real sorrow—God Himself. He comes unutterably near in trouble. In fact, one scarcely knows He exists until one loves or sorrows. There is no 'getting over' sorrow. I hate the idea. But there is a 'getting into' sorrow, and finding right in the heart of it the dearest of all human beings—the Man of Sorrows, a God.[1]

2. 'What shall we say then to these things?' It is worth while to get into the habit of putting the question to the things that meet us. What shall we say to the sorrow that has invaded our home? What shall we say to the big disappointment that has dashed some hope to the ground? Some door has closed, perhaps; some opportunity has passed us by. What shall we say to the closed door? What shall we say to the disagreeable task? Shall we say to ourselves and to it exactly what we first feel about it, making the burden twice as hard to bear? What shall we say to the man who has let us down; or done us some real injury? How shall we treat him? It matters tremendously for ourselves, and for the world in which we live. What shall we say to the difficulties of the present hour? Business is at a standstill; we have to cut down our expenses, to do without. The future looks dark; the stars go out one by one! What shall we say to these things? Are we going to make them a stimulus or a challenge, or are we going to let them become an irritant, or drive us to despair or to self-pity?

¶ 'So Arthur Balfour is really leader,' he writes to his wife from Mafeking in November 1891, 'and Tory Democracy, the genuine article, is at an end. Well, I have had quite enough of it all. I have waited with great

[1] W. R. S. Miller, *Reflections of a Pioneer*, 116.

[1] Forbes Robinson.

patience for the tide to turn, but it has not turned, and will not now turn in time. . . . More than two-thirds in all probability of my life is over, and I will not spend the remainder of my years in beating my head against a stone wall. I expect I have made great mistakes; but there has been no consideration, no indulgence, no memory or gratitude—nothing but spite, malice, and abuse. I am quite tired and dead-sick of it all, and will not continue political life any longer.'[1]

What did Paul say? His first reflection was 'If God be for us, who can be against us?' His first thought was to assure himself again that nothing, literally nothing, not even death, could be against him. Nothing need hurt, or demean, or degrade his spirit. On the contrary, because God was for him, everything in this clash between him and circumstances had possibilities of good. This faith robs everything of its power if we once get it into our blood. If we meet life in this confidence we shall find in it a transforming secret. And this faith will begin to produce in us new capacities for meeting life—courage, and kindness, and patience. Difficulty will work on us like a tough problem on the mind of the engineer, who knows that difficulty has always been the doorway of discovery.

¶ We do not think Napoleon was a good man, but he had many of the qualities of a great one, and one of them was the power to refuse to accept misfortune. It is said of him that once for a whole morning a battle went against his forces till his officers were nearly in despair. He pulled out his watch and said, 'Gentlemen, it is now two o'clock. We have lost one battle. There is still time to win another.'

3. The practical conclusion which forces itself upon us is that the misfortunes which come upon us need not conquer us. We need not be their victims. What God gives to those who seek Him is very largely just courage—courage to carry sorrow and go on with our duty; courage not to think about ourselves and keep busy serving others; courage to resist our own nature when it cries out for ease and pleasure; courage to brace ourselves and just endure. Why all the military language in the New Testament, in which the Apostles called on men to fight bravely, endure hardly, and wear the whole armour of God? Why the calls to watch? Because this is a world in which we have to meet the strokes of chance. Perhaps some day we shall see that they are really the onslaughts of evil. In any case, they have to be resisted, and that is why life has to be very much like a campaign. God's servants are the bold. Not the naturally strong—not the great in ability, not those whom the world counts great—but the bold who are bold with a boldness begotten of the fact that they know they fight with God on their side.

'Masters of fate'—that should be true of all Christians. Not people immune from the strokes of fate, but people who cannot be conquered by fate. And that is possible if we go up to meet every evil chance in the strength that God gives.

> Of wounds and sore defeat
> I made my battle stay;
> Winged sandals for my feet
> I wove of my delay;
> Of weariness and fear
> I made my shouting spear,
> Of loss and doubt and dread
> And swift oncoming doom
> I made a helmet for my head
> And a flowing plume.
> From the shutting mist of death,
> From the failure of the breath
> I made a battle horn to blow
> Across the vales of overthrow.
> O hearken, love, the battle horn!
> The triumph clear, the silver scorn:
> O hearken where the Echoes bring
> Down the gray disastrous morn
> Laughter and rallying—[1]

If God be for Us

Rom. viii. 31, 32.—'If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?'

1. It is out of a life rich in memories of victory that the Apostle speaks his challenge. And we know the source whence he derived that conquering courage and trust. It was Christ's creation—our Lord's gift to an age which was worldly wise and therefore world-weary and hastening towards its fall. So, if we would

[1] Lord Rosebery, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 8.

[1] William V. Moody.

learn to share the Apostle's confidence and to pass on to others his heartening challenge, we should turn back to the pages of our Lord's own wonderful life.

(1) Of its vivid pictures perhaps none is more impressive as a lesson in faith than the story of our Lord's astonishment on the lake of Gennesaret. That story is commonly called 'The Stilling of the Tempest,' but this is quite a misnomer. If the sole interest of the narrators had indeed been fixed on the cessation of the storm, we might well have hesitated to credit their account. It is not the marvellousness of the achievement that awakens suspicion, for our Lord did much that was even more marvellous. What might provoke doubt is the easiness with which a tale of mere prodigy might grow up in a miracle-loving age. But, while to invent the prodigy might have been easy, to invent our Lord's astonishment—to invent a way of treating the disciples' terror that has about it such a distinguished originality—this is an achievement beyond ordinary myth-making powers. Shall we study for the moment the sequence of event and action?

The elements raged; the disciples trembled; our Lord slept. They wakened Him with their weak but most humanly natural appeal: 'Master, carest thou not that we perish?' Now what, under these conditions, was the obvious course for our Lord to follow? What was the course which, in virtue of its obviousness, would naturally have been attributed to Him if the story had been legend? In the judgment of our own age the obvious action for a religious teacher under such circumstances would have been to preach a sermon on the duty of trusting God in time of danger. To a prodigy-loving age, on the other hand, the obvious action might have seemed to be the Master's stilling of the tempest. But to no age would that sequence of emotion and deed seem obvious which, we are told, marked our Lord's behaviour. That which, to His own spiritual vision, shone out so luminously—the Heavenly Father holding in the hollow of His mighty hand the little lake, the dangerous little tempest, the tiny boat with its specks of human creatures—this He flashed upon the disciples' natural vision by asking that Father's hand to close upon the little tempest and crush it into stillness. And then, with never a second thought for the deed that He had done, He turned to the disciples and asked in grieved surprise: 'Why are ye fearful? Have ye not yet faith?' It is as though He said: 'If God be for you, can a mere tempest be against you?' The logic is the same as that which St Paul uses, but in the deed which went before the reasoning there shines out that utterness of belief in the Heavenly Father's willingness and liberty to be *for* us which was Christ's new, unique contribution to the religious life of the world.

What stirs our wonder is not so much any particular idea implied in our Lord's action here as His attitude to the deed He had done—His evident lack of any feeling that what had occurred was out of the common. It is in this feature above all that the narrative reveals its essential authenticity. It is dominated by the originality of thought and deed of One for whom it was indeed one of the commonplaces of everyday life that the Father controls the mightiest forces of Nature in the interests of human faith—in the interests even of the humblest lessons which that faith needs to learn. It is simple fact that the Father is always controlling the forces of Nature in the interests of faith, and so the stilling of the tempest was indeed something commonplace—a mere making visible of what He is doing all the time. And it is this feature of the story that enables it to teach so precious a lesson. Death is not commonplace, but life is. Things to come are not commonplace, but things present are. Yet equally a matter of everyday commonplace fact is God's control of the world for the ends of faith. And so neither death nor life, neither things to come nor things present, can separate us from the love of God. If God be for us, what can be against us? If God be for us, no tottering of our life's structure need make us despair—not shadowed homes, nor the enfeebling of the Church's testimony, nor the threatened collapse of our civilization.

¶ Dr Inge tells of a Cromwellian ambassador at The Hague who tossed anxiously on his bed until his servant reminded him that God governed the world well before he came into it and would govern it well after he left it; and he could surely trust Him to govern it well while he was in it—at which the worried ambassador turned on his side and went to sleep. Let us go farther back for another illustration—to the time of Jeremiah. That was a crisis to shake anyone's nerve. The city was surrounded by the armies of a great

empire; within, everything was in confusion. The prophet himself was in prison. Fear was in every man's heart. At that moment a kinsman came to Jeremiah and offered to sell him a plot of land in his native village of Anathoth. The suggestion seemed absurd. The enemy then held Anathoth and there was no reason why he should not hold it for ever. Those title deeds in the kinsman's hands were as ineffective as a Pope's bull against a comet. Every prudent man would say that to buy that plot at that moment would be as fantastic as bidding in the war at an auction for the Spanish farm about which R. H. Mottram wrote. It was like investing money in a bankrupt concern. Yet Jeremiah immediately accepted the offer and carried the purchase through with all the usual legal formalities. And he was not mad. He was demonstrating his confidence that normal life would be resumed in Anathoth—which confidence sprang from his faith in God.[1]

(2) Does this one picture-lesson from the great life of our Lord suffice us? Or do we perhaps complain that in the face of merely external danger—in presence, say, of a physical tempest—trust is easy? Do we want an object-lesson from a case of spiritual extremity? If we do, let us turn another page in the life of our Lord.

There came a critical stage in His great enterprise of winning for the world the Kingdom of God, of winning it, if possible, for His own beloved nation too. The crowds had been stirred, but their attitude was undecided. It seemed that a little more might win them, but just as possible that this little more might repel them. And then Jesus was led to work the miracle of feeding the thousands, that miracle which they ought to have felt so eloquent of the kind of Heavenly Father in whom Christ sought to awaken their real trust. Yet upon very few did it have this effect. In the majority it aroused instead a lust for worldly well-being and provoked a scheme to force Jesus to take the lead in a politico-social revolution. Such a revelation of human blindness of soul seems to have brought home to our Lord the certainty that His ideal could not be won in the way in which He had longed that it might come to pass. He quieted the crowd and caused it to disperse. He hurried the disciples away by themselves in a boat. He Himself retired to the hills that He might be alone, and might in the solitude of prayer wrestle with that which He now saw so plainly before Him.

But in the loneliness of that night there was no stillness. The winds rose and howled about His place of retreat. With the whirlwind of men's vain excitement, resting on no solid basis of insight, from which He had just escaped and to which He must presently return, there linked themselves in His mind the eddying gusts of the storm, as they sprang up seemingly from nowhere and whirled so madly around. The scurrying clouds that raced across the face of heaven appeared one with the follies which, chasing each other across the field of man's vision, continually obscure from Him the true countenance of God. Out yonder on the lake Jesus could see the disciples' frail craft tossed and threatened by the hungry waves. Was not the fair vessel of His own life-work also at sea in this very tempest, where the spiritual and the material, joined in one unholy alliance, made simultaneous war against all that to Him was dear? Perched high up amid the chaos of the elements, the soul of our Lord wrestled on in solitude. And then upon His straining faith there fell an inward peace. He saw the tempest, both spiritual and physical, held in the hollow of His Father's hand, its noisiest fury impotent to work more than His Father's will. And Jesus arose and walked down the hillside—walked right out into the waves.

There is nothing in the narratives to suggest that our Lord thought of working a miracle, or that He meant to teach a lesson. Jesus had the poet's cast of mind, which is quick to find the invisible clothing itself in the visible, and for which the dividing line between material and spiritual is ever very thin. And just as, a little later, the barren fig-tree blended in the poet-mind of Jesus with the barrenness of Israel, so here at this high-strung moment the physical storm had become for Him indistinguishably one with the spiritual conflict that threatened to shipwreck His God-given mission. Thus it came to pass that the act of gazing calmly into the heart of that *human* tempest whose fierce threatenings absorbed His thought worked itself out naturally, unself-consciously, possibly at first without His own express

[1] F. H. Ballard, *The Desire of All Nations*, 29.

notice, into the act of breasting the *physical* storm, walking out into the very sea, and treading down its waves which He saw tossing themselves so impotently in the grasp of His Father's hand.

Is this too venturesome a reading of this strange story in the life of our Lord? It may be so. But at any rate a spiritual crisis did drive our Lord that evening to seek solitude on the mountain-side, and to stay there through hours of storm. At any rate He did conquer. And beyond all question the secret of His victorious serenity, as He walked upon the waters with apparently no desire to reach the boat, was not different from this: 'If the Heavenly Father be for us, what can be against us?'

2. What more can our faith need to stir it to new life than St Paul's challenging logic, and these object-lessons in proof of its validity. And yet, strange though it may seem, we do want more. We want more because there is one dishearteningly obvious answer to St Paul's logic. 'It is true,' we sadly murmur, 'that if God be for us, no one can be against us—no one but ourselves. Yet we ourselves are our own worst enemies, and God will not force our human wills.'

But we have not done with St Paul's logic so quickly. We must follow his argument to its close. 'He that spared not his own son'—that is how the reasoning proceeds, and it reaches to the uttermost of our need. The Apostle's challenge passes on to us our Lord's message, but besides His message there was His mission.

Our Lord's message—the central thought which was the inspiration of all His deeds of human faith and words of wondrous power—was this: that God is so absolutely *for* us as to leave no reason in the world why we should not obtain from Him what will satisfy our every need—no reason but this, that we will not, or do not, go to Him in a spirit that permits Him to do as He would wish and grant our every desire. Now, besides this message of the Lord, our Brother, there is the mission of the Lord, our Redeemer. The Father knows our impotence to approach Him as we should, and therefore it was that He 'spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all,' so that, this our impotence having been abolished through the work of His Son, He might be able with Him freely to give us all things.

How does the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, do the work that charms away our impotence? None can fully answer such a question. Many of us have found Him beginning to do His work, and perhaps we fancy that we understand a little of His magic. But the whole we do not, nor do we need to, understand. It is enough for us that He does it. It is enough for us that all the Godhead of God is at stake in His ability to do this—enough for us that God would not be God if He could not save a soul so long as it even feebly desired to be saved.

Why do we sometimes find it so difficult to believe that even all the resources of the Godhead can conquer sin in our own personal case? We feel so just because, and we feel so only when, this impossibility *has* begun to be accomplished. Our self-despair is the first part of Christ's transforming work in us. We do not know that we are so stubborn until He has begun to soften us. Let us thank Him, then, for the hopelessness with which He sometimes oppresses us; and when those times are at their worst, let us repeat to ourselves that our salvation is God's responsibility—His age-long purpose through Christ.

¶ Do we hope?—then let us thank God, and do better, and love more. Do we despair?—let us thank God, and do better then too. For despair is the witness to His presence with us in our black prison-house of sin.[1]

The pardon of sin is the crown of His glory,
And the joy of our Lord to be true to His Name.

The Son who was not Spared

Rom. viii. 32.—'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?'

THERE are two different ways of regarding the Divine Sonship of Jesus Christ, towards one or other of which Christian thought has often tended. One may be called metaphysical. It abounds in abstract words, designed to express His essential Deity in terms of human philosophy. The great historic creeds tended more and more in this direction. The other and

[1] May Kendall, *The Fatherhood of God.*

opposite mode of construing the Sonship of our Lord might be called humanitarian. From this opposite point of view our Lord is the Son very much as we all are sons, though very much more perfectly than we. The difference between Him and ourselves lies not so much in ultimate origin as in moral and spiritual stature. The New Testament seems to guard against this humanitarian way of thinking from the outset. Christ teaches His disciples to pray, saying, Our Father, but He never joins with them in the act as if He and they were precisely on the same level. If He speaks in the same breath of His sonship and theirs, He distinguishes—'My Father and your Father,' He says. Continually there is claimed for Him, continually He claims for Himself implicitly or explicitly, a unique origin in the bosom of the Father, a unique message from God to men, a unique power to interpret and reveal the Father's very heart.

To re-read the New Testament with these thoughts uppermost is to discover that the apostles of Christ took a line of their own on this high theme—perhaps about as different from the merely metaphysical point of view as from the merely humanitarian. It would be no very inaccurate definition of the line they took to call it the evangelical line. They had a gospel to preach, with an uplifting and redeeming power in it which the merely humanitarian conception could never express, and therefore also with a glowing tenderness about it which no philosophical phrases, however orthodox, could ever contain. The characteristic New Testament note is in a phrase St Paul uses elsewhere, 'The Son of his love': that is the essential message—the New Testament emphasis in presenting the Divinity of Christ. The Son who was inexpressibly dear to God and intimately related to Him, the Son who was the expression of the Divine Will and the eternal Desire, He it was that was God's gift and sacrifice for men: He it is that is the revelation of the heart of the Eternal and the measure of God's love to man. And though in this passage Paul does not use the full phrase, 'the Son of his love,' the tenderness of the thought with all its evangelical implications is present in the words, 'His own Son.' His own Son, and God did not spare Him!

1. This line of thought brings us close to some of the strangest of God's dealings with men. It almost compels us to think of *some whom God does seem to spare*, who apparently have all that they want, unchecked, unhindered, undisciplined. The Psalmists were greatly puzzled by this problem. Why has God, again and again in the troubled history of the world, given a long rein and a loose rope to the tyrants, the money-lenders, the man-slayers, the men whose God is their belly? Why did He spare the Chief Priests and the multitude with swords and staves closing in upon Gethsemane? It is easy to raise such questions and hard to answer them. For reasons of His own, which He still keeps covered by His hand, He often spares those who seem most worthy of discipline or even of destruction. Men are wise if they do not despise His forbearance, or misinterpret the leisure of His action, or forget that, though 'He does not pay at the end of every week, at the last, He pays.'

2. Thoughts are stirred also about this strange fact that *it does not always seem to be God's way to spare those who are dear to Him.* That was the other side of the problem which the Psalmists faced so often—not only 'I was envious at the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked,' but also the hard case of God's people, 'Waters of a full cup are wrung out to them.' That order of experience, especially when it is all crowned by the sufferings of Christ, is the reason why in the New Testament the wheel of thought has come full circle: if prosperity was the blessing of the Old Testament, adversity has come to be the blessing of the New, because men have discovered that to be 'spared' is no proof of God's favour.

¶ Temple Gairdner of Cairo wrote to a friend: 'I am sure you will understand if I write wretchedly, because the excess of thoughts kills expression. What was uppermost in my mind was this—the apparent cruel mystery of our poor P.'s life. With "Parts and character" that fall to the lot of few indeed, all wrecked and ruined, and apparently foredoomed to ruin if not from the very first, certainly from very early. To our human vision, a masterpiece of misguidance and misdirection, causeless and pitiless. Like the saints of the Old Testament I crowd on the shades of agnostic gloom, because it wasn't till those saints expressed all, all they felt along that line, that they got their ray of illumination: see especially Job, and Habak-

kuk. And some of you have darker tints to add, which I can only imagine, and cannot bear to dwell on even in thought—your sight of his actual pain, so protracted, fruitless, terrible. . . . Just before the news came I read, in a rather complacent chapter, that the message of the Book of Job had been largely superseded by the New Testament. I queried it as I read, I query it even more now. The New Testament has indeed enormously enlarged the area of illumination, but so long as we are in this world of limitation and do *not* yet "know as we are known," so long it seems to me will the Book of Job be a sheet-anchor in insoluble difficulties like the life and death of P. What I get back to is this: some areas in heaven and earth are illuminated, and some remain black as primitive night. From the illuminated one has faith to believe that the whole is illuminable, that is all. I will interpret the unilluminated areas from the illuminated, not *vice versa*. Calvary has enormously enlarged the illuminated area of that dark riddle, has in *principle*, I believe, given us its key; but in the application of the principle whole areas remain dark still.'

3. Thus we arrive at the overwhelming fact that *the chief among those who were not spared was His Son*. His well-beloved. We think instantly of the Cross, but there was much even before the Cross relevant to this theme. Experience teaches us that life, quite apart from death, takes more out of some than out of others. It seems as if, in not sparing His own Son, God began by giving Him a mind and body peculiarly susceptible to sorrow and suffering, peculiarly responsive to all the demands of life. When He healed the sick, virtue went out of Him. Those who watched saw something in Him which reminded them of the ancient word, 'Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses.' When we see Him asleep in the little boat, unawakened by the storm, we realize how much He had been giving out in word and deed ere utter exhaustion had fallen upon Him. We may write across such details as these, 'God spared not his own Son,' and there are many things to fit into the thought, until at last the story of His Passion writes the message afresh in unfading crimson. At the heart of history this still burns and shines, the flaming climax of revelation, terrible and tender: 'God spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all.'

4. It is possible to see in the light of all these things that the unsparingness of God may be an honour and not a condemnation. It is a thought which is indispensable to a true and optimistic interpretation of life. There are times when life seems strangely, tragically unsparing in its infliction of loss and pain, in its demand for sacrifice and service. It is well to remember reverently that in this matter the Highest and the humblest come under one law. God spared not His own Son; but one half of the miracle was this, that the Son was content not to be spared, if by His offering of Himself He might redeem and lift the world. In which matter He becomes a pattern and a pioneer to those who in their turn are faced with the unsparing demands of life and destiny. They do well to seek for initiation into the mystery of Christ and hallow all their grief by bringing it under the shadow of His Cross. Many have felt their burden grow lighter there.

Christ's heart was wrung for me, if mine is sore,
And if my feet are weary, His have bled:
He had no place wherein to lay His head:
If I am burdened, He was burdened more:
The cup I drink He drank of long before;
He felt the unuttered anguish which I dread,
He hungered who the hungry thousands fed,
And thirsted who the world's refreshment bore.

If this law that binds the Master and His servants together in uplifting the world by pain and sacrifice seems an unsparing law, at least He and they are beneath its yoke together. If He submitted, the rebel heart is for ever haunted and shamed by His Cross.

¶ Archbishop Temple writes to a friend, 'My burden grows, but when it is heaviest I refresh my heart in my Redeemer's sacrifice.' And Adolphe Monod, the great French Protestant divine, dying of cancer, cries in his suffering, 'The Cross! The Cross! O Christ, through pain I reach the mystery of Thy Cross! I am in Gethsemane at night, in Golgotha at morningtide, on Calvary at noon, but the remembrance of Thy Cross sustains me, oh, my Saviour!'

St Paul goes even deeper and turns the unsparingness of God towards His Son into a gospel. 'He that spared not his own Son, but

delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?' Dr Denney sums up the lesson by saying, 'The Christian's faith in providence is an inference from redemption.' Whether that be true of the ordinary Christian or not, it was true of St Paul. Perhaps the ordinary soul tends to believe in a fatherly providence first as he tastes the reality of God's goodness in the daily gifts of life. Then as he enters into the deeper experiences he adds a doctrine of grace to his doctrine of providence. St Paul's mind seemed to work the other way; the Cross was to him so clear, so sure, so new, so arresting, that all other gifts were included in that gift, all other promises certified by that sign. God's deepest reason for not sparing His Son was that He loved men, that He would not leave them to that banishment from His presence which their sins most righteously had deserved, that at all cost of seeking and finding He would bring them back to Himself. He did not spare His Son: He did not spare Himself. If life is often unsparing in its demands, all the more need to keep close to that Cross where God's severity and His tenderness meet, the Cross which, once set up to be the sign of doom and the token of a vast demand, turns out, when Redeemer and redeemed reach the hither side of it, to be the banner of mercy and the emblem of an inexhaustible compassion.

The Secret of Victory

Rom. viii. 37.—'Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.'

1. In this passage, as in many another in the New Testament, the outlook on life is that of conflict. It is an opportunity not for leisure, ambition, or amusement, but for battle. Life is a campaign.

'The true God,' says H. G. Wells, 'goes through the world like fifes and drums and flags calling for recruits along the streets. We must go out to Him. We must accept His discipline and fight His battle. The peace of God comes not by thinking about it, but by forgetting oneself in Him.' This reminds us of the far grander picture of St John, who saw Christ riding on a white horse at the head of a conquering army, on the one hand crowned with many crowns, and on the other robed in a vesture dyed with blood; on the one hand marked out clearly as King of kings and Lord of lords, and on the other darkly mysterious, bearing a name which no one knows but He Himself. And this army of men and women who follow Him has grown to immense proportions during the years of His great campaign, but all are marked by the signs of conflict. 'Whence came they?' the Apostle asks. 'These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the lamb.'

With these thoughts in our minds we can the better understand why each life is part of a campaign, and why the Great Leader of our race on the eve of His Death cried, 'I have conquered.' It was a trumpet-call of encouragement to His followers. His conquest did not mean that the cause for which He stood had finally triumphed. For in the same breath He says—though I have conquered, yet in the world ye shall find tribulation, as I have done; you will be misunderstood, hated, persecuted, for the servant is not above his Master; but be of good courage, I have conquered, and you will conquer too. And so it was found.

Witness the men whom with a word he gaineth,
Bold who were base and voiceful who were dumb:—
Battle, I know, so long as life remaineth,
Battle for all, but these have overcome.[1]

2. Paul, His chief captain, writing to a city of conquerors, a city where the procession of conquerors in the streets was a constant sight, asserts, not 'We have conquered,' but 'We are more than conquerors.' More than conquerors. And Paul knew as few did what fighting meant. In a letter to one of his staff just before his death he says—'I have fought the good fight, and henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.' And Timothy knew well what the words meant. It was in his very earliest days that he had seen his master engaged in a great contest, fighting first with the dangerous enemy popularity, when he was acclaimed as a god, and then within the same week overcoming the rage and hatred of the same people, who stoned him and left him for dead; and this was only one of a long series of battles. With beasts he had fought at

[1] F. W. H. Myers.

Ephesus, with critical intellectualism at Athens, with criminal injustice and infamy at Philippi, with failure in Galatia, with division and misunderstanding at Corinth. He had known cold and nakedness; he had experienced imprisonment; he had been scourged again and again, misrepresented, abused, and hated; he was in daily anxiety about the Churches he had established. And yet through it all he could write, 'In all these things we are more than conquerors; we have not only held our positions, but held them without calling upon our reserves—and with unexhausted resources; we not only remain victors on the field, but are as fresh to-day as we have ever been; we are more than conquerors.'

Who is there that does not envy the great Apostle his triumphs? For though accomplished in himself, yet they became part of victories throughout the world. Emerson is surely right when he says:—'Every institution is the lengthened shadow of one man, as Monachism of the Hermit Antony, the Reformation of Luther, Quakerism of Fox, Methodism of Wesley, Abolition of Clarkson . . . and all history resolves itself easily into the biography of a few stout and earnest persons.' But why few? The trumpet-call is to us as to them; to the small as to the great; to those occupying insignificant as well as to those filling great positions. This victorious career is not for the few, but the many; not to one here and there, but to all.

¶ 'If there are any good wars when I grow up, I mean to fight in them,' Sir Philip Sidney is said to have declared when a boy.

¶ In some quarters it is taught that there is not now the same opportunity for arduous action and painful sacrifice in the cause of personal and public righteousness as existed in primitive days. Lecky writes: 'The more society is organized and civilized, the greater is the scope for the amiable and the less for the heroic qualities.' We cannot think so. Our age is indeed different from that of St Paul, but it does not less demand heroic qualities. Only as we strive and suffer for right and purity as against the baser elements have we any part or lot in the glory of the future.[1]

3. And what is the secret of victory? Here is the secret: 'We are more than conquerors *through Christ that loved us.*' It is conquest through the energy of an imparted love. Nay, it is much more than that. It is conquest through humble yet intimate communion with the eternal Lover. You remember what conquests the knights of the olden time could achieve when they were conscious that the eyes of love were fixed upon them in the jousts. And if this was so with knights of ancient chivalry, when love inspired them in the fray, how infinitely more must it be so with the knights of King Jesus' Order when they know that His eyes are always fixed upon them in the field! 'He loved me,' sings the greatest of the apostolic knights. 'He loved me, and gave himself for me.' What tremendous exploits of patience and of service lie latent in that supreme assurance!

For all love conveys the lover to the beloved. The very secret of love is self-impartation. Love can never content herself with the gift of things. Charity gives things; love always gives herself. And if love is thus self-giving, what inconceivable giving is wrapped up in the love of Christ for Paul, and in the love of Christ for us! The Saviour's love is the giving of Himself.

Shall we now dare to put that vast and awe-inspiring content into the text? 'We are more than conquerors through him who has given himself to us.' That word expresses the very gospel of His grace. The Christian faces all his circumstances, not merely with a love but with a Lover, and with a Lover who Himself mastered every circumstance, and was the conqueror of sin and death. So this is how the gospel music rings: 'We are more than conquerors through Him the Conqueror!'

Shall this divinely-urgèd heart
  Half toward its glory move?
What! shall I love in part—in part
  Yield to the Lord of love?
O sweetest freedom, Lord to be,
  Thy love's full prisoner!
Take me all captive; make of me
  A more than conqueror!

[1] W. L. Watkinson.

Super-Conquerors

Rom. viii. 37.—'We are more than conquerors through him that loved us.'

'More than conquerors' is an expressive phrase. It means we are super-conquerors, not ordinary conquerors, through Him that loved us.

1. We are not ordinary conquerors, because our victories through Him that loved us are always worth the cost. There is often a doubt, is there not, whether some victories are worth the price paid for them, victories in war, some victories in peace? At the end of a modern war, victors and vanquished alike are exhausted: the whole world is unsettled; trade, by which the victor must live, is disorganized; millions of the best citizens, not of one side only but of both sides, victors and vanquished, lie dead. The price paid for victory in war is a long, long price, paid in part by the victor's children, and his children's children. An entirely justifiable question is—'If that is so, where did the victory come in?'

Is it not also quite frequently the case that a man gives himself up to carving out a successful career and nothing must stand in his way? He wins power, possessions, and glory; he is a great success; he is a great victor. The newspapers say so, his obituary notice says so, drawing attention to all his victories. But one sometimes wonders whether, far from being a victor, he is not one of the vanquished, his victories having cost him too much. The price may be his health—not that that is so much; it may be his home and his friendships, and these are a good deal; it may be his peace of mind, and that is a terrible price; it may be his soul, and that is everything. He is a conqueror, but he is an ordinary conqueror. 'We are more than conquerors through him that loved us.' The victories we win because Christ loved us and because His love inspires us and sustains us are not such victories as these. They are victories that bring no regrets; they add no burdens; they never mean that we have sacrificed things of greater worth for things of less; they are always real victories and never camouflaged defeats. These victories are pure gain, not only for those who win them but for every one else.

¶ Dr John Hutton has said: 'You can conquer if you are strong enough, but you can more than conquer only if you are good enough.'

2. We are more than ordinary conquerors also because our victories through Him that loved us are over our real foes. The victories which the world holds as its greatest victories, and will continue to hold as its greatest victories until it learns wisdom, are victories over men, with wives and children to worry about them when they are in the fighting-line, and to mourn for them bitterly when they are dead. These other victories, in peace, to which we have referred, so often mean, do they not, the remorseless trampling of competitors underfoot? Who are competitors but men with wives and children, made sad by the same sorrows, and glad by the same joys, as all their fellows? Peace has its victories no less ordinary than war. They are victories over men.

But men are not men's real enemies. Our real enemies are within ourselves, our selfishnesses, our weaknesses, our jealousies, especially our fears. Fears of what? Fears of life and of death, of things present and of things to come; fears of calumny and criticism, fears about our own sufficiency for the responsibilities and duties of life; fears to commit ourselves to the highest vision we have seen. Paul gives a fairly comprehensive list of the things that men fear: Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, angels, principalities, powers, things present, things to come, height and depth. It is over these that 'We are more than conquerors through him that loved us.'

¶ 'He has not learned the lesson of life,' said Emerson, 'who does not every day surmount a fear.'

¶ 'I heard a great preacher in Scotland,' says Dr Macmillan, 'once declare in public that his greatest fear was lest he should not win through to the end without moral disaster. I had that fear too for many years, but it is gone. It was when the allies with evil were still in my heart, and I never knew when they might betray me. But those treacherous occupants have gone, and the heart is garrisoned with friends—'whatsoever things are true, honest, pure, lovely, and of good report.' Christ is within the heart. I have found my security and peace once and for all in Christ.

3. The world has plenty of ordinary conquerors whom it acknowledges and acclaims, conquerors whose conquests cost far too much, conquerors over men, who leave men's real foes unvanquished and undiminished. There is need for another word for the men and women whom no one acknowledges, whom no one ever recognizes as having won victories at all. What shall we call those who are bearing burdens cheerfully, who are making great sacrifices for others, who are resisting the temptations which so easily beset them, who are fighting fears in their own hearts? Paul's name for them is 'More than conquerors.' He means that there is more of the stuff of conqueror in them than in ordinary conquerors.

It was Paul who said, 'More than conquerors,' and he knew what conquerors were. He was a Roman citizen. He saw the Roman victors as they went riding in their chariots through the streets; they belonged to a conquering race. Paul knew them, had seen them, would see yet more of them, knowing well that he might be arraigned before their governors. But Paul had to visit obscure corners of Rome and Antioch and Ephesus to find those who were 'More than conquerors.' There he saw men and women who were fighting against the old lusts, the pagan superstitions, who were indeed fighting a universe full, as they believed, of devils, angels, principalities, and powers. They were slaves and poor folk generally, but in the sight of God they were conquerors in a truer sense than were those who despised them.

¶ Here is what Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, says of the Christians of the third century: 'If I could ascend some high mountain and look out over the wide lands, you know very well what I should see. Brigands on the high roads, pirates on the seas, in the amphitheatres men murdered to please applauding crowds, selfishness and cruelty, misery and despair under all roofs. It is a bad world, an incredibly bad world. But in the midst of it I have found a quiet and a holy people who have learned a great secret. They are despised and persecuted, but they care not. They are the masters of their souls. They have overcome the world. These people are the Christians—and I am one of them.'

It was Paul who said, 'We are more than conquerors.' He was himself only a wandering preacher, not very strong, not of commanding presence, not very eloquent, seeking his precarious lodging from place to place, sometimes lodged in prison, sometimes thrown out of doors to be stoned and left for dead. No one thought of him as a conqueror in an Empire full of the pride of conquest. Yet does not history say he was, in his generation, the greatest conqueror of them all?

God recognizes and acclaims, not the ordinary conquerors, but those who are more than ordinary. Make no mistake about it. Men acclaim the ordinary conquerors, but not God. It is only as a man or woman wins a clearer, stronger, more Christ-like spirit that God will recognize in him or her one who is more than conqueror.

Inseparable Love

Rom. viii. 38, 39.—'For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

1. St Paul does not say that all things become easy to those who are in Christ; that these cease to have any anguish of the body or any shadow upon their soul. He does not say that they cease to suffer, that they cease to have their perplexities, that life becomes a smooth thing for them and death spreads its dark wings and flies away. He says none of these things. What he says is the very opposite. Every single thing that makes life poignant to the human soul remains. Indeed, to us Christians, in virtue of our new sensitiveness, those sinister things have a greater power to give pain; and, in addition, our new sensitiveness has introduced us to whole worlds of possible wounds and shadows of which others have no experience. Life is more vivid, more acute, more directly assailing to us—what then? What advantage have we over others? We have this advantage—nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

What, then, we see in this great passage is a man facing, in the power of his experience of Christ, the worst that life can bring, triumphing, in the power of his communion, over the evils of existence, and over such spectres of the mind as he has already known and as he can arouse by the force of his very imagination.

He recalls the things that have tried to

separate him from the love of God, and he asks —Shall tribulation, anguish, persecution, or famine? Shall nakedness, peril or sword? I have been through all these, he says, and I have actual proof of the love of God, for in all these trials I have been more than conqueror. And as he faces up to life he still sings in a major and not in a minor key. He knows there are some sore tests in the future, but it is not in any boastful spirit, but with wistful and almost haunting fear, due to a growing self-knowledge, that he asks this further question—Can even these things separate us from the love of God that has brought us so far? Can they have any more power to separate us than those we have conquered in the past?

2. Let us look at the range of things that test the nature of God's love and that assail the veracity and steadfastness of our own faith.

(1) The first of them is *our own experience.* 'Neither death nor life . . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God.' *Death!* What a crude fact it is, driving its iron wedge into the limits of this strange, mysterious life of ours; and the whole question of immortality comes quivering up into consciousness with such a sentence as this. Death, which seems to end things, but leaves us so far apart from our beloved! Shall the dream that has been so fair, that beyond the world there lived a Heart that cared for us, vanish into thick darkness and leave us utterly alone? Death shall not separate us from the love of God; death is but a moment in life, an incident in a soul's career; and if God loved us once He will love us for ever, and on beyond the boundaries of the world God's love waits to be gracious. Death need make no man afraid who has believed in the love of God.

¶ 'After my first great sorrow,' says 'Margot' in her *Autobiography*, 'the death of my sister Laura, I was suffocated in the house, and felt I had to be out from morning to night. One day I saw an old shepherd, named Gowanlock, coming up to me, holding my pony by the rein. I had never noticed that it had strayed away, and, after thanking him, I observed him looking at me quietly. He knew something of the rage and anguish that Laura's death had brought into my heart; and, putting his hand on my shoulder, he said: "My child, there's no contending. . . . Ay . . . ay . . ." shaking his beautiful old head, "that is so, there's no contending."' No, there's no contending. But there is Christ and in Him life and love for evermore.

Fear death?—to feel the fog in my throat,
The mist in my face,
When the snows begin, and the blasts denote
I am nearing the place,
The power of the night, the press of the storm,
The post of the foe;
Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,
Yet the strong man must go:
For the journey is done and the summit attained,
And the barriers fall,
Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,
The reward of it all.
I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,
The best and the last!
I would hate that death bandaged my eyes and forbore,
And bade me creep past.
No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers
The heroes of old,
Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears
Of pain, darkness and cold.
For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
The black minute's at end,
And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that rave,
Shall dwindle, shall blend,
Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,
Then a light, then thy breast,
O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,
And with God be the rest!

But what of *life*? Life with its brightness, life with its gaiety, life with its temptation; what of the days that pass so busily, so full of interests? Have not these the subtle power of stealing from the heart the thought of God, of so possessing us with the petty matters of our days that there is no room for Him in it all? Shall life separate those from the love of God whom death cannot separate? Life may indeed make us too busy, too foolish, too

absorbed in the passing interests of the day, but life shall never take from the heart of the eternal God the love that once He has given to us. It is not what it can do to us, but what it can do to God that concerns this assurance, and neither life nor death shall separate us from the love of God.

(2) Then there are *the unseen forces of evil.* The experiences of this world shall not separate us, but what is there beyond this world, the unseen, that lingers in us and sometimes almost breaks through, that men have so differently interpreted—'angels, principalities and powers'? If we study the thought of Paul's day we shall find a very orderly and detailed system of demonology, in which they conceived a brood of evil spirits who tempt the souls of men. There are those who still hold that view, and there are those who take other views of such matters. We may call it that, or we may call it nerves, or we may call it any name we please; the difficulty is not in what we call it, but in what we find it to be in our daily experience; and whatever be the ultimate explanation of these things, this remains true, that some day we waken with our whole heart set upon doing the will of God and pleasing Him, and before the day is half done some power from without or from within, some power like a great evil hand, has laid hold upon our life and broken it across, and everything has gone wrong with us, and we try in vain to right it. The day is handed over to the powers of darkness.

¶ We read from time to time in the despatches from the Front that for some days there has been little doing. But, suddenly, the whole scene is changed. For, in a moment, whole hell is let loose, till the amount of carnage cannot be counted. And your inward war and mine, my brethren, is often exactly like that. For we also have sometimes comparatively quiet days and nights; comparatively unassailed days and nights. But then, like them at the Front, sometimes without a moment's warning, the very devil is let loose in all his fury within our souls.[1]

If there be anything in our experience which makes it difficult to remember and believe in the love of God, it is just such a thing as this. In any sort of bitterness, so long as it be a smooth-flowing experience, we can continue to believe; but when this sort of thing happens, God has gone from heaven, and all things are left the sport of evil power. We are in His universe, however, and these are but the hounds of God that He holds in the leash in His hand and will not let them too far upon the souls He loves. That also is part of the great love of God, and His love has not been defeated by angels or principalities or powers. He loves us still through the worst day of it all.

(3) And then we have *the tyranny of Time and Space*—'nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth.' Science reckons the size of the universe, as now unveiled, in light-year measurements, and the age of man upon the earth in æons that make us dizzy, until our tiny lives, so brief and broken, seem as insignificant as the life of a mote in the evening air. It is this sense of vastness that makes for the pathos of Tennyson, and for the cynicism and pitifulness of Hardy, and for the frivolity and sensuality of smaller irresponsible writers. These are the various consequences which are inevitable, and they threaten us all peculiarly in these days when we have become aware, as no age ever could be aware, of the intolerable duration of time, and the aching immensity of space.

What is it all, if we all of us end but in being
our own corpse-coffins at last,
Swallow'd in Vastness, lost in Silence, drown'd
in the deeps of a meaningless Past?

What but a murmur of gnats in the gloom, or a
moment's anger of bees in their hive?—[1]

¶ I remember being very depressed, as a small boy, by a diagram of Time which I discovered in a manual of popular science. It showed a long winding road, representing the history of the earth's inhabitants as they are known to man. The road had a 'time-length' of some 2,000,000,000 years. The first part of it was lost in fire and smoke. . . . It was only in the near foreground (if I rightly recollect, it was about 50,000 years ago, before the climax of the Fourth Glacial Age) that we came to a form of man at all, and even then it was only Neanderthal man whom we encountered. For Man as we know him (a very different creature) was born only yesterday. A mere matter of 30,000 years ago.

[1] Alexander Whyte.

[1] Tennyson.

Now this picture greatly worried me, although to-day I must admit that this sort of statistics has rather lost the power to impress. The vastness of Time need not concern man because for nearly all of Time as we know it the curtain had not yet risen on his little drama. What God was doing behind that curtain throughout infinity need not really concern us. The only thing of which we can be quite certain is that He was preparing scenes of incredible beauty—for somebody. And that somebody was man.[1]

May we not say that it is this very challenge that Paul is facing here: Shall the height or the depth separate us from the love of God? Of course the ideas which those words called up for him would be other than they suggest to us. But beneath the surface here also is a man facing the universe, overcoming the terror and discouragement of it by the power of his faith in Christ.

As he ends his catalogue of the antagonists of faith the Apostle flings out the sweeping, all-inclusive phrase: Nor anything else in all creation shall be able to separate us from the love of God. It is as if he had got impatient of the enumeration of impotencies, and, having named the outside boundaries in space of the created universe, flings, as it were, with one rapid toss, into that large room the whole that it can contain, and triumphs over it all.

Not any power the universe can know
Can touch the spirit hid with Christ in God.
For naught that He has made, above, below,
Can part us from His love.

3. 'I am persuaded.' It is a great thing to be able to use such words as these with regard to the supreme verities. It is like having one's house built upon a rock instead of upon the shifting sand. It is like having one's course clearly marked upon the chart, and one's rudder and compass in perfect order, as compared with the man who has neither chart nor compass, and simply drifts. 'I am persuaded,' wrote the Apostle, and, being persuaded himself, he has persuaded millions more; for your convinced men, the men certain of their ground, the men who can ring out, 'It is so,' 'I know'—these are the strong men, the men who do most work, the men of widest, most potent influence. It is the men who, like Paul, can say, 'I am persuaded,' 'I know whom I have believed,' or, like Luther, 'I cannot do otherwise,' that move the world; for if doubt is contagious, thank God faith is contagious too.

¶ It was Mrs Humphry Ward, in her introduction to Amiel's *Journal*, who said: 'The day is over for the certain people.' If Mrs Ward had said that the day was over for the 'cocksure' people, she would have been nearer the truth. We have reason to believe that the 'sure' people are only beginning to have their day. Never before, to our knowledge, have there been so many 'certain people' in the world. The number is daily increasing of those who can stand up and say, 'I know whom I have believed, and am certain that he is able to keep me.' There are those who, like G. K. Chesterton, are 'simply prancing with belief' in regard to the very things that are causing most people the gravest uncertainty: things so disturbing and devastating as death, danger, calamity, pain, persecution, famine, nakedness, or sword. To be able to stand up against the painful and inscrutable problems of life and of death, and to say: 'I am certain'; 'I know that none of these things can possibly make any difference to those who have a real experience of Christ and of the love of God; that none of these things, whether present or to come, nothing in all creation, can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord'; that is surely what Christianity needs to-day to make it victorious and carry all before it. There is no standing up against such testimony.[1]

Nor Life

Rom. viii. 38, 39.—'Neither death, nor life . . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God.'

'NEITHER death, nor life.' Does the order strike us as strange? Does it sound like an anticlimax? That is not how we should have written the sentence. We should have reversed the order of the words and written, 'Neither life nor death.' That is indeed how one of our hymns puts it:

From Him who loves me now so well,
What power my soul can sever?
Shall life or death? Shall earth or hell?
No! I am His for ever!

[1] Beverley Nichols, *The Fool Hath Said*, 53.

[1] E. Macmillan, *Finding and Following*, 169.

We should naturally proceed from what we regard as the lesser to the greater peril. But which of the two is the greater peril? Which of the two is the more likely to separate us from God?

1. Whatever hard things we may say about death as it appears when it comes close to ourselves, one thing we cannot deny; it brings us face to face with reality. Death delivers us from the confusion and incubus of a thousand petty cares. The shadow of death takes all commonness out of the soul. One perceives a kind of aristocracy in the bearing and in the tone of voice of one who has been deeply bereaved.

Far from death and the things which accompany death separating us from that world which lies beyond our sense experience, nothing has such power to purify the soul and fill the empty space with God. Jacob and Esau, two brothers, separated for long years, the heart of the one bitter for revenge, the heart of the other trembling with fear, coming together again in friendliness over their father's grave, helping each other to lay the old man's body in its last resting-place—that is a parable of the proper function of death in life.

> O earth, so full of dreary noises!
> O men with wailing in your voices!
> O delvéd gold, the wailers heap!
> O strife, O curse, that o'er it fall!
> God strikes a silence through you all,
> And giveth His beloved sleep.

2. In common experience it is not the deep things like death, but the shallow things of life, that have the most disastrous influence upon the soul. All through his long career, man on the whole has borne honourably the inevitable facts, he has found within himself and in God resources with which to quieten himself in prospect of his own departure from this world. This may have happened to him because confronted with something which, like death, is inevitable, he has ceased to try to sustain himself, and, leaning back in his weakness, he has come upon the Everlasting Arms of God. Certainly it is a fact worth pondering that we all of us do better face to face with the big things than with the little things. We are greater when we bend under a burden than when we are still quarrelling with some mere care.

¶ A drowning man is not aware that he is getting wet; for when a man is getting wet, it is his comfort that is being invaded, whereas in drowning a man is fighting for his life.

There is more danger of atheism in the management of the little things of life than in the management of the deep things. In the management of the smaller things we imagine that we are sufficient for ourselves; and therefore we become harassed, moody, liable to a thousand fears; whereas, in presence of the great things, the inevitable things, the ultimate human things of life and death, we know and we acknowledge that we are not sufficient, that unless God be with us there is no hope.

3. But the question, Shall life separate us from the love of Christ? must have had for Christians of the first century a quite definite meaning. They were for the most part slaves. And the thing that makes slavery intolerable to Christian minds is not simply the physical hardship that accompanies it. What makes slavery—and if the same can be said of any existing social arrangement, then it also is contrary to the mind of Christ, and must go—what makes slavery obnoxious to Christian minds is that it disposes its victims to accept as the truth *their own sense of worthlessness*.

But what had those first Christians wherewith to overcome within themselves this sense of worthlessness? They had the wonderful knowledge that Jesus Christ had thought them worthy. He had given Himself for them. We cannot to-day even imagine the thrill of self-respect, of self-recovery, which would run through their veins like fire to read or to hear such words as 'who being in the form of God . . . humbled himself and took upon himself *the form of a slave*.'

There are certain conditions which more than others tend to make people think in a mean way about themselves and to lose heart. It sometimes comes home to us, with a force which brings us to a standstill, on what innumerable lives of obscure monotony the fabric of our own personal comfort is sustained.

¶ 'Some time ago,' says Dr Hutton, 'I was passing through a huge factory, and there, amidst heat and the clanging of machinery, I saw a man punching holes with a hammer. Stroke upon stroke, stroke upon stroke, his arm rose and fell. I watched him for some

time, but there was no variation, no need, it would appear, for any further mental resource on his part. That is his work by the hour and the day and the year—until, I suppose, his hand becomes faulty, and he has to stand aside.

Forenoon and afternoon and night,—Forenoon
And afternoon, and night,—
  Forenoon, and—what,
The empty song repeats itself.[1]

There are always those—and in a complicated and heedless civilization they must be a great host—who, unless they have faith, might well suppose that life, the kind of life they must daily lead, had cut them off or was slowly shutting them out from any freedom of the spirit, from any personal initiative or high communion. And indeed, apart from our faith that we have a private life within the love of God, apart from our faith that God cares for us one by one, with all that that implies and shall lead to, what are we better any of us than so many conscript soldiers, so many victims and prisoners of life!

¶ 'Unless the hairs of your head are all numbered there is no God.' The words are George Macdonald's, and they put the challenge to faith in its clearest and boldest form. We all want to believe that our hairs are numbered; that we are the objects of a special loving care. We feel with Michelet: 'Let the sentiment of the loving cause disappear, and it is over with me. If I have no longer the happiness of feeling this world to be loved, of feeling myself to be loved, I can no longer live. Hide me in the tomb.'[2]

Man lumps his kind i' the mass.
God singles out unit by unit.
Thou and God exist.

Shall life separate us from the love of God? Does our work force us to the conclusion that our particular life can be of no concern to God? Can the pressure of poverty, or friendlessness, or the failure of our aims, or the disappointment of our hopes—can these things separate us from the love of God? Is it our settled conviction that the future can have no glad surprises for us? Do we feel old age creeping on, and are we conscious that the future will bring to us little of human joy—no happiness that comes from the love and the laughter of little children? Have we no bright prospects to look forward to? Can these things separate us from the love of God?

It is the testimony of Paul, and the testimony of thousands into whose inheritance we have entered, that these things have lost their power to interfere with those who are conscious of the love of God, and who enjoy the living comradeship of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul, who said about death, 'to die is gain,' said about life, 'to me to live is Christ.'

[1] E. R. Sill. [2] J. Brierley.

The Divine Love Incarnate

Rom. viii. 39.—'The love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

WHO is Jesus Christ? and what has He done for men? The answer of Christian faith is, He is God manifest in the flesh, who for us men and for our salvation lived on earth and died upon the Cross and lives for evermore. Yet there are many to whom such formal definitions are valueless because they have not any sufficiently definite meaning in relation to our common experience of human life. Even those who are prepared to accept the formula feel only too keenly how little they really understand it. 'Christ Jesus,' says a thoughtful writer, 'was in outward seeming like other men; His Divinity is discerned only by spiritual grace.' That is true, and it is worth our while to inquire along what lines human nature is open to this spiritual grace, so that seeing Christ along them we may discern God in Him.

God, the Divine spirit at work in the world, can be discerned by man only along such channels as are open to man, and the common description of the three main channels as power, thought, and love, will be a sufficiently clear and comprehensive one. From the first the forces of Nature were obvious and impressive, and man expressed his sense of these in primitive idol-worship. As civilization advanced the ideas of order and intelligence were perceived more and more clearly, revealing wisdom as well as power in the Divine. Last and highest, as family affections grew deeper and more refined, love was recognized as an essential, and indeed paramount, quality of God.

He who undertakes to manifest God in the

flesh, then, must work along these lines, combining and, as it were, epitomizing in himself the power, wisdom, and love of God. It is this that Jesus claims to have done. He was that mysterious being who had power thus to sum up in Himself the entire process of God's life in man. He achieved in one short lifetime the exhibition of the character and action of the eternal God.

1. *Power.*—As to the power, there can be no question that in Jesus history records a quite unique display. Whatever theory may be adopted in regard to the miracles it is abundantly evident that here was One who laid mighty hands upon the individual lives with which He met, and that in His healing and helping energy men recognized the epitomizing of forces which would have otherwise been seen only in lengthy natural processes. Still more does His power reveal itself in that grasp of mental and social phenomena which, through the agency of the Early Church, utterly changed existing society, set for the world new ideals, and set free within it new forces whose operation waited its time, but was irresistible when that time had come. And this is but the chief example of those immense supplies of *reserve* power which we are aware of in reading His life and words. One feels always that there are wide margins of possibility beyond the actual deeds recorded, and that His forces of character and influence are never put forth up to the edge of their field of exercise.

2. *Thought.*—Similarly the thought of God is revealed alike in His sayings and in His life. The wonder of the speech of Jesus is not its novelty, but rather a sense of familiarity and recognition which it awakens. It is as if we had known this before, though we had never been able to express it. Fragments of conviction, broken and imperfect intuitions and impressions about moral and spiritual things, spring into living knowledge when we have heard Him speak. It is as though the thought of God, which had been striving for utterance in the process of life, had extricated itself from manifold contradictions, and stood out clear and convincing, as final truth.

3. *Love.*—But most especially does the love of God manifest itself in Christ. It had been seen before Him in all human love, in families and among friends. All love is of God, as we are told so emphatically in the first Epistle of John. But at best human love could give but a confused idea of Divine love, and in some cases it must lead rather to doubt than to assurance. For love on earth is often divorced from wisdom and from power, and then its folly and its ineffectiveness lead rather to scepticism than to faith. If it is to reveal the Divine love in any credible or consoling fashion, it must be brought back into relation with thought and power.

Love needs thought and wisdom. It is often blind and uncomprehending, a mere passion not far removed from the senses, and utterly unfit for any confidence in so complex an engagement as human life. Such unthinking and unwise love is one of the commonest of man's curses on the earth. In a world like this it is not enough to love; we must love wisely. And instead of mere uncomprehending emotion, love needs a deep insight, a vast stretch of imagination, ingenuity, and conscience, to make it valuable or even safe.

¶ 'Ask,' writes Dr Fosdick, 'the psychiatrists what ruins children, twists their plastic lives, imposes on them inner handicaps which the finest skill often cannot remove, and they will say it is not so much bad parents—they are not so frequent—as stupid parents. And the crux of the matter lies here: they did not need to be stupid; there was plenty of information available if they had counted it as serious a part of their obligation to be intelligent as to be kind. They knew they ought to be kind. All the moral voices that ever spoke to them about parenthood told them to be kind. Nature herself said that. But not enough voices have told us that to love children without being intelligent about it can damn them as utterly as brutality can.'

Not less does human love require power. As Butler said of conscience, 'Had it strength, as it has right; had it power, as it has manifest authority, it would absolutely govern the world.' But, as a matter of fact, love is constantly mastered on the earth. Selfishness, arbitrary circumstances, poverty, the lapse of time, all are seen to conquer it. Finally death comes, and love in passionate rebellion struggles in vain against that enemy. In view of these things there is many a life in which love,

confessedly the most precious of human gifts, is yet also the weakest.

But the love of Jesus was illuminated by knowledge and fortified with power: it was strong as it was wise. He saw and understood those whom He loved. His insight penetrated to the depths of man's folly and sin, reconstructed his scattered ideals and insecure principles, interpreted him to himself, and so taught him to love discriminately. Similarly His love was strong enough to accomplish that which human love can only desire and long to do. His miracles are not recorded as mere displays of power but of love that was strong enough to cope with human sorrows. Faced by death itself that love did not fail. It was stronger than death. Love was thus set free by Christ as an actual and effective force in the midst of human life with its needs and its perplexities. That wise and powerful love is among us yet. And in it and in its effects we see God, and understand not His love only but also His wisdom and His power. And the more carefully we observe its contact with life at the acutest points of man's suffering, temptation, and wretchedness, the more clearly we see in Jesus the setting free of the eternal wisdom, power, and love upon the earth.

¶ We depend on Christ for all true knowledge of God. Guesses are not knowledge. Speculations are not knowledge. Peradventures, whether of hope or fear, are not knowledge. What we poor men need is a certitude of a God who loves us and cares for us, has an arm that can help us and a heart that will. The God of 'pure theism' is little better than a phantom, so unsubstantial that you can see the stars shining through the pale form, and when a man tries to lean on Him for support it is like leaning on a wreath of mist. There is nothing. There is no certitude firm enough for me to find sustaining power against life's trials in resting upon it, but in Christ. There is no warmth of love enough for us to thaw our frozen limbs by, apart from Christ. In Him, and in Him alone, the far-off, awful, doubtful God becomes a God very near, of whom we are sure, and sure that He loves and is ready to help and cleanse and save.[1]

[1] Alexander Maclaren.

THE GOSPEL IN HISTORY

Rom. ix.-xi.

St Paul has now finished his main argument. He has explained the gospel of Christ. He has shown the need of it. He has shown how it comes with its message of comfort and hope to men afflicted with the consciousness and the power of sin, and appalled by the demands of a law inexorable and unattainable. He has guarded it against want of comprehension and perversion. He has shown the richness and power that it gives to a man's whole life. He has traced its working from the moment when a man gives himself up to Christ by his own act of faith and self-surrender, and by the rite of baptism is initiated into the Church and made a partaker of the privileges which membership of that body implies, until that final attainment of perfect union with Christ which is the end of the Christian life.

But now comes a question which has often been before his mind as he wrote, which he has already begun to discuss, but has put aside until he has finished his main argument, and which no thoughtful person could help raising. How was it that the Jews, the chosen people of God, had not attained this righteousness? Were they not the chosen people? Had they not been the guardians through centuries of strife of the Divine revelations contained in the Scriptures? Year by year they had offered up the solemn services of the Temple. They could point to their ancestors the patriarchs, to the long roll of their prophets. They had been the recipients of the Divine promises. From them in these last days the Christ had come. They had fulfilled their mission, and they were cast away. What wonder if there was questioning and doubting! What wonder if men began to doubt the wisdom and the justice and the mercy of God!

With this question St Paul now deals, and mark how cautiously and considerately and sympathetically he begins. He does not even

venture to state the subject he is discussing, he only gradually allows it to become evident. He emphasises rather his own kinship with the race. He is full of sympathy and sorrow. He who, but a few lines before, had written that nothing, neither life, nor death, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, could separate him from the love of God in Christ, now deliberately declares that he could give up that life in Christ if he might thus save those who were his own brothers.

1. *The Sovereignty of God.*—The Apostle then begins his argument. In the first place, the Jews could not plead their privileges. It is true they were descendants of Abraham, to whom the promise was given; but it was quite clear that that promise was not to all the descendants of the patriarch, but only to those whom God had chosen to be recipients of it. The children of Isaac were chosen, the children of Ishmael were not chosen. But it might be argued that that was not a fair case, that Ishmael was not equally well born with Isaac. The second instance has no such defect. Jacob and Esau were sons of the same father and the same mother, born at the same time. And the choice between them was dependent on no merits of their own; it was made before they were born. Jacob was chosen and Esau was rejected. It was quite clear, therefore, that on the same principles on which the Israelites were chosen and the Edomites rejected, God might choose some Israelites and reject others; or choose the Gentiles and reject the Jews.

Nor could any Jew complain of injustice. The Old Testament Scriptures to which they appealed showed how God had chosen Moses for one purpose, and Pharaoh for another; the one for honour, the other for dishonour. And the Scripture had very plainly declared that the grounds of choice were not in any case merit, but simply God's will. Nor, again, as men could they speak of injustice, even if God had acted arbitrarily. God had created man, and his relation to those whom He had created was simply that of the potter to the vessels that he made. In relation to his Creator man has no rights; he cannot speak of justice or injustice. God on every principle of right and justice may do what He will with man, just as absolutely as the potter with his clay or the vessels which he has made.

Like the earlier chapters, like every argument and passage in the Epistle, this section has proved the basis of a great system of Christian doctrine, a system which, like so many others, has interpreted in a one-sided way, has at times exaggerated, at times perverted, an isolated portion of the Apostle's language. Calvinism has ceased to be popular as a creed; and probably at the present day we are inclined to underrate the value of the vigorous logical thought, of the manliness of mind refusing ever to avoid a difficulty, of the grasp of the sovereignty of God which the system exhibited.

An abandonment of Calvinism in its rigid form does not mean, and cannot mean, an abandonment of the belief in the sovereignty of God, that God is in all and through all, and over all, that He can make even the wrath of man to praise Him, that through history He is fulfilling His purpose. Paul's assertion of the arbitrariness of the Divine action in the first part of his argument is an instance of the type of reasoning which the logicians call *argumentum ad hominem*: he rebukes Jewish arrogance in claiming exclusive privilege by this declaration that God can do as He pleases. But we have only to put into the form of the Divine sovereignty the content of the revelation of the Father by the Son to be assured that there is no arbitrariness in God's action, that it is reasonable, righteous, gracious. His character as Holy Love, and His purpose as redeeming grace, give us a pledge that His action is not, and cannot be, anything but beneficent, and universally beneficent, seeking, striving, and even suffering for the good of all.

2. *The Responsibility of Man.*—Having asserted without qualification the sovereignty of God, Paul shows that as a matter of fact Israel's rejection is not in the exercise of God's arbitrary will, but is due to the disobedience of unbelief. God's purpose has been resisted, His grace rejected, His salvation refused. But he places these two truths side by side without any attempt at their reconciliation.

In any approach to this problem we must move from the more known to the less known. We know ourselves as we do not know God; we are conscious of our freedom as we cannot be of His sovereignty; the interests of morality and religion alike demand that we should fully recognize our own responsibility; we can and

do choose; we are to be praised or blamed as we choose right or wrong. God does not compel us by His power to choose one way or another, although His holy love may constrain us freely to choose the right, or restrain us freely from choosing the wrong. Not only so, but inasmuch as we are partners with God in the fulfilment of His reasonable, righteous and gracious purpose for mankind we can hinder and delay or help and hasten that fulfilment. God has limited His sovereignty in His dealings with men, so that His will concerning them is done not by the suppression of, but in co-operation with their wills. His sovereignty is not a physical omnipotence; it is truth, holiness, love wooing and winning men to belief, trust, and submission. Whatever reserves or resources of the Divine sovereignty there may be concealed from us, what is revealed is a rule of God not only tolerant of, but dependent on, and realized through, the freedom of man.

3. *The Purpose of God for Man.*—Having on the one hand asserted God's sovereignty, and on the other man's responsibility, Paul concludes his argument by showing how God's sovereignty shall at last prevail not over but in man's liberty—grace overcoming unbelief. God's purpose shall be fulfilled for man, for the Jew as well as for the Gentile.

The Jews had been rejected; but the rejection was not complete, and it was not final. The rejection had been temporary, and with a purpose. Through it salvation had come to the Gentiles. Paul rests on an historical fact. He remembers that day, now long past, in distant Antioch, when he had uttered those memorable words: 'From henceforth, we go to the Gentiles.' And now remembering past years, remembering the effects, unexpected and incalculable, of that rejection of Christ by the Jews, seeing before his eyes the daily increasing body of Gentile Christians, he looks forward into the future, and arguing by analogy predicts a time when the Jews will return to the Messianic salvation. Was not their stock holy? If the Gentiles, the branches of the wild tree, have produced such fruit when, in quite an unnatural manner, they have been grafted into the stock of the cultivated olive, what will not be the result when the original branches are re-engrafted into their own stock? And so, seeing how in one case God's ways have been unexpectedly justified, and relying on the Divine wisdom thus signally justified, Paul looks forward into the future. His imagination expands; he foresees a time when Israel as a nation will come to Christ; and the wealth of spiritual life which this will mean will win the world to Him. God's purpose has been to shut up all as prisoners of sin, that all may need and enjoy His mercy. Where we can follow God's ways we can see how His wisdom and mercy are vindicated, and so Paul breaks forth into the praise of the wisdom and mercy of God, giving what is both the conclusion and the logical basis of his argument: 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out. . . . For of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things. To him be the glory for ever. Amen.'

What shall we say of St Paul's predictive vision? Has his philosophy of history proved true or false? From the vantage ground of nearly twenty centuries after, with all the disclosures of the intervening years, Paul's view of history seems (necessarily) provincial, lacking in perspective, and therefore, on the surface at least, a miscarriage. The course of events has not been as he anticipated. The olive tree is still dismantled. New races and religions have come into view of which Paul did not dream. The whole scope and movement of human life and history have been immensely enlarged. And yet who can say that the great Apostle's underlying confidence in the Divine grace and in the leavening power of the revelation of God in Christ may not yet be justified? Never was the gospel of universal peace and goodwill more present in the hearts and thoughts of men, though enormous obstacles still confront it. Jesus Christ was never so widely known and loved and never exercised so great a saving power. May not Paul's glowing vision of humanity redeemed—however remote and however differently from the way he conceived it—yet, in effect, come true?

The Passion for Souls

Rom. ix. 3.—'For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.'

'I CAUGHT myself wishing—praying—that I were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.' Nothing brings us nearer the heart of St Paul than that. His wish, it has been finely said, was a spark from the fire of Christ's substitutionary love. 'Hearing these words, white-hot with love and wild with all regret, words surely as moving as anything in the literature of the world, we seem to watch the centuries falling away, and Paul, the born Jew, takes his stand with that other great priestly and vicarious soul, the lonely Jew who stood before God on Sinai in the morning of Israel's days, and cried, "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written."'[1]

¶ The Bible bristles with astonishments. One of its greatest surprises is its amazing economy in this matter of wishing. Indeed, I am not sure that a single clear-cut case of wishing occurs in its pages. The man who, startled by this statement, reaches down his concordance in order to test my accuracy, will make quite a number of interesting discoveries. He will find, to begin with, that the word is extremely rare. He will find that, even where the Authorised Version employs it, the later translations have substituted some other term. He will find that such wishes as do appear are all of them remarkable for their modesty; each is well within the bounds of possibility. He will find, too, that all the wishes are unselfish wishes, wishes for others rather than for the wisher. But as he carefully inspects this very small but very instructive collection of mental records, he will come with a start upon one tremendous yet half-formed wish that will send a shudder through all his frame. Its very incompleteness is impressive; it stands like some vast colossus that the sculptors never lived to finish. 'I could have wished,' says Paul, 'that I were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsfolk according to the flesh.' Coleridge tells us in his *Table Talk* that when he read these words to a friend of his, a Jew at Ramsgate, the old man burst into tears. 'Any Jew of sensibility,' the poet adds, 'must be deeply impressed by them.' To be sure! For when a man can wish as nobly as that, we all creep to his feet and seek to learn from him the secret of his splendid wishing.[1]

1. St Paul turns here to the great and staggering fact that his own beloved people, of whom Christ sprang, had rejected their Messiah. It looked as if God had cast away His people whom He foreknew. They had failed of their share in the gospel by their rejection of it. With an extraordinary passion of pain and yearning, the Apostle looked out upon the scene. He was a true patriot. Of most Christians it may be said that some souls are almost as inextricably interwoven with their thought of heaven as the Redeemer Himself. It was so perhaps with St Paul. Some of the mystics have imagined that one chief pang in our Lord's passion was that He looked with His dying eyes on the Temple which had cast Him out, on the doomed city that had slain Him, foreknowing the bitter hour when the altar would be broken down, and the song put to silence, and the gates burned with fire.

'I caught myself wishing.' How wonderful is this arrest of the soul by the self. Most commonly the current runs on, and the regal power abdicates for the time; but now and then the master speaks to the servant. 'Why art thou cast down, oh, my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?' 'I caught myself wishing'—I discovered my ruling passion. How would it be with us if we had a sudden hand laid on us in the same way? Perhaps those who fancied that they were working from the highest motive would find they were dominated by the lowest. They would catch themselves wishing to be talked of, to be rich, to be popular. When we sharply pull up our thought, inhibiting it for the moment, what is it? Should we discover that the real longing and expectation of the soul are turned towards things poor and earthly, that we are possessed with a craving hunger seeking to satisfy itself with husks? But the Apostle caught himself wishing to be accursed from Christ for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh.

This was not the calm deliberation of his 'I reckon,' and it must not be judged as if it

[1] J. S. Stewart, *A Man in Christ*, 35.

[1] F. W. Boreham, *The Home of the Echoes*, 223.

were. Suppose we knew but a part of the wish, and if it ran, 'I caught myself wishing that I were accursed from Christ,' none of us could believe that St Paul ever said it, for his words mean all they can mean. They mean a complete and final separation from the Lord Jesus Christ. Such separation could never be. Christ would take care of that, as the Apostle well knew when he came to himself from this strange and noble madness. But he meant that he was willing to make the supreme sacrifice for his brethren. All the other sacrifices had been made before. Every human tie had been sundered, and in comparison despised for the union with Christ and the Church. In the eyes of the world, St Paul possessed nothing; but he knew that he had the pearl of great price, and for love of it he had given all that he had. It seemed to him for a moment that he would have even parted with that and surrendered eternal glory for himself that his brethren might find the Lord and be blessed. It was, of course, an impossible prayer, but he came nearer Christ than ever in the very hour when he dreamed that he was ready for estrangement.

2. Some one has pointed out the striking contrast between the dominant interest with which St Paul says, 'I must see Rome,' and that which the words would ordinarily reveal. The Apostle was eager to visit the imperial city only because he was eager to preach there also the gospel of Christ. Every other ambition of his life has passed into this. All the waters of his soul had gathered themselves into one mighty flood to be poured through the narrows of this single purpose: 'To preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which from all ages hath been hid in God who created all things.' The urgency of his message burned like a fire in his bones; his passion to win men was like a Divine constraint which gave him no rest.

¶ John Wesley, hearing of the Isles of Scilly across the narrow seas, notes in his Journal: 'I had had for some time a great desire to go and publish the love of God our Saviour, if it were but for one day, in the Scilly Isles.'

Something like this must be the spirit of every missionary of Christ, whether his sphere is 'at home' or 'abroad.' Without love to the uttermost we can never impress the hearts of men and women with our reality. We need enthusiasm, conviction, whole-hearted devotion.

'Let my name be blotted out, but let France be free,' cried Danton at the height of the French Revolution, and the same disregard of self for the sake of bringing salvation can be the only secret of power. It is the spirit of utter self-forgetfulness that makes a man or a woman a missionary.

'One type of Indian Buddhism,' says Estlin Carpenter, 'looks to Avalokiteçvara, who made the famous vow not to enter into final peace until all things—even the worst demons in the lowest hell—should know the saving truth and be converted.' Given a Church inspired by a spirit like this we should speedily win the world. Obstacles would prove no hindrance; sacrifices would be regarded as privileges; we should feel that the end before us was worth all the cost it demanded.

'Jesus,' says the writer to the Hebrews, 'in order to reach His own appointed joy, steadily endured the cross, thinking nothing of its shame.' He had the vision of a redeemed world before Him, and He did not hesitate to pay the price when the price was demanded. As He thought of all that men and women could be if He were only faithful to His saving vocation, 'He humbly stooped in his obedience even to die, and to die upon the cross.' He endured to the uttermost, but His love for us sustained Him, and His sacrifice of Himself made our salvation for ever a reality.

'As thou hast sent me into the world,' He said, 'so have I sent them into the world, and for their sakes I consecrate myself that they may be consecrated by the truth.' To have fellowship with Him is to share His spirit, and to resolve like Him to 'endure the cross, thinking nothing of its shame,' if only men and women thereby may be saved.[1]

O for a passionate passion for souls;
O for a pity that yearns;
O for a love that loves unto death;
O for the fire that burns.

O for the pure prayer-power that prevails,
That pours itself out for the lost,
Victorious prayer in the Conqueror's name,
The Lord of Pentecost.

[1] Henry Cook, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 130.

Father, forgive the cold love of the years,
As here in the silence we bow ;
Perish our cowardice, perish our fears ;
Kindle us, kindle us now.

Lord, we believe, we accept, we adore,
Less than the least though we be ;
Fire of love, burn in us, burn evermore,
Till we burn out for Thee.

One Taken—The Other Left

Rom. ix. 13.—'As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.'

THERE is no stranger sentence on any page of Scripture. Even when we remember the Oriental use of the vivid and arresting word it remains a bewildering declaration. Had it been found only in the prophecy of Malachi we might have passed it by. But when it is reaffirmed by Paul, with his quenchless compassion for the lost and castaway, it provokes us to a deeper surprise. When we recollect who Jacob was, the meanest and least lovable of all the Hebrew personalities, and when we remind ourselves of his self-centred mind with its tenacious pursuit of his own advantage, we are tempted to protest. When we summon up his life, with its twisting and turning and scheming, we wonder where Paul's moral discernment was when he set his approval on this strange word of a Jewish prophet. Give us Esau, we are ready to cry, rather than this man who did no heroic deed, gave no generous gift, made no costly sacrifice, yet is said to be the man whom God loved.

¶ 'That meeting between the brothers,' says Dinah Morris in *Adam Bede*, 'where Esau is so loving and generous, and Jacob so timid and distrustful, notwithstanding his sense of the Divine favour, has always touched me greatly. Truly, I have been tempted sometimes to say that Jacob was of a mean spirit. But that is our trial : we must learn to see the good in the midst of much that is unlovely.'

The fact that one is taken and the other left is, as Jesus declared, a fact of life. An accident takes place and one man is taken from among the débris and carried to his grave. Another man by his side goes home unharmed. Two men begin a career in life. Both seem to deserve well of fortune. One succeeds to a position of influence. The other remains obscure and unknown. One is taken and the other left. But we are led to answer that although there be this mystery in the providence of God, there ought not to be this mystery in the dealing of His grace. Above all we feel that in this matter of the soul God should give every man his fair opportunity, and that some men seem obviously to be dealt with unjustly, with the consequence that while one man is taken, the other is left. Many a man thinks in his heart that when he looked along the narrow way and even faced the strait gate, he was not helped and led through it as others have been. He begins to think that God dealt with him as with Esau, rather than as He dealt with Jacob, and this word of Scripture seems to confirm his thought.

If we look at this statement as it is expounded in the cases of Jacob and of Esau, we may come to understand the truth which Malachi and St Paul both affirmed. Why did God regard Jacob with favour but look on Esau with condemning eye ?

1. An Apostolic writer sums up the character of Esau in a brief and pregnant phrase : he was a 'profane person.' Esau was a 'profane' man in that he had no spiritual sense—no religious instincts, for he had developed wholly on the physical side. To such a man there was nothing sacred. He valued the sanctities of life only for what they would yield in the way of present gratification. This is proved by the fact that he could barter the highest spiritual privilege of his race, the noblest heritage to which he could succeed, for a mess of pottage in an hour of passing hunger. He could do so with a coarse jest on his lips. That is the light in which the Scripture writer sees the incident of the selling of the birthright. We are held by Jacob's meanness in taking advantage of his brother's hunger. We scorn Jacob's swift seizing of his opportunity when he saw Esau's eyes gleaming with a wild beast's desire for the red pottage. We are confident in our word of condemnation. But the Scripture sees the situation more deeply. Here on the one side there is a man within reach of the blessing for which his soul had been famished through all the years. Think of what it means

to be left out of a coveted succession by the accident of birth. Realize the trial of standing on the threshold of a career but being forbidden to enter the door. Call up your dreams of the vocation and destiny which you knew could never be attained. When these dreams have pictured a noble service and an honourable succession, how great has been the poignancy of disappointment! How often had Jacob cried in secret, 'One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after.' On the other side there stands this profane person—the man to whom the noblest opportunity, and the spiritual endowment which belonged to it, had no more value than a steaming bowl of lentils. In the record the condemnation is passed not on Jacob, but on Esau, 'Thus Esau despised his birthright.' Can we wonder that the one was taken and the other left?

We can mark this spiritual sensibility with its responsiveness to God and its sensitiveness to God's will throughout Jacob's whole life. Consider him as he lies down to sleep at Bethel. He is a fugitive and alone, a wanderer, in disgrace with fortune and with men. He is suffering that deepest misery to every man with a conscience, of self-reproach and self-despising. Note how he bears himself. The question we have to ask of every man is not whether he has yielded to some overmastering temptation. None of us can cast a stone at Jacob. The question to ask is how a man bears himself when he is conscious of his fall. Had Esau found himself compelled to flee out of the home he would have made his way to the children of Heth, where he had chosen his alien heathen wife, and found his fitting welcome and his congenial company. But Jacob, with his keen spiritual sensibility, turned his thoughts towards God, stretched out his hands in prayer, and, when the stars came out, he was found kneeling in the shame of the penitent. In the midnight silence God came down the great stairway that is always open from heaven to earth and kissed him while he slept. It was that kiss which awoke Jacob, and brought the grateful cry to his lips, 'Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.'

2. Jacob is the most strangely mingled personality in Scripture. We see him robbing his brother, deceiving his father, outwitting Laban, and shrewdly blunting Esau's vengeful anger with a gift which caught his brother's eyes. Yet within the soul of Jacob there was the power to become a child of God. To anyone who expresses surprise that God should have chosen Jacob and rejected Esau, let it be said that God recognized the possible in Jacob. God saw behind the features of this crafty Hebrew the moving of a spirit which could find its delight in doing the will of God from the heart.

There is a metaphor in the Old Testament which is used as a parable by all the prophets. It pictures God as a refiner and purifier watching His crucible. He takes the ore which has been dug out of its vein in the rock, defiled by clay, encrusted by quartz, mingled with base alloys, and He casts it into His furnace. He sits by it as the refining fire does its work. He waits until the ore has been purified, so that He can see His face in the gleaming metal. Then He pours it into the ingot whose gold may be fashioned into a bowl for the high altar. Gold in the ore; gold in the furnace; gold in the pure and precious metal; yet always gold, despite its alloy. So God saw the gold in Jacob. He marked his avarice, his cunning, his self-will, but He saw his moral possibilities, and He purged out the base elements in his character. In long years of exile, in days of summer heat and winter cold in the hard service of Laban, through suffering wrong and being deceived by others, by fear and sorrow and disappointment and loss, God cast this man into His crucible, until at last there was left on him only the beautiful.

What a word of comfort there is here for every man limited and impeded by his faults and flaws! One man has his tormenting greed. Another has his vexing and humbling temper. Another has his jeering and wounding tongue. Another has that secret devil of envy which chafes and frets even at the advancement of his friend. Another has his darker passion which so often imperils his purity. Is it in us to yield ourselves to God, until our spirits shall become ennobled by His Spirit, and our bodies shall be temples of the Holy Ghost? Then God will take us and chasten and cleanse us. He will meet us in some crisis of our life, as he met Jacob at Peniel, and wrestle with us until we walk with some withered faculty until the

end. But He will perfect that which concerns us, and bring our moral possibilities to steadfast power and beauty. But if not, if there be no such possibilities, or if we will not submit and surrender, He must leave us to ourselves, and the fate we are fashioning. One shall be taken and the other shall be left.

¶ 'I remember visiting a factory in the north of England where costly china was being made. The thing that interested me most in all that I saw was the painting of the finished product. It had been through many different processes, and was taken to a studio for the artist to complete. I saw the pattern being put on in various colours, and noticed that a great deal of black was being used. On asking why, I was told, "It is black now, but it will be gold when it comes out of the fire."'[1]

3. God looked at these two men and marked the contrast between them, and at nothing more eagerly than their fitness for the Divine purpose. We do not entrust a high office to a man of inconstant character, led by impulse, betrayed by appetite, everything by turns and nothing long. We do not commit a sacred charge to a profane and self-willed reveller. God marked these faults in Esau. He saw only an undisciplined character, a self-willed nature, a spirit akin to the heathen with whom Esau mingled. Therefore He loved Jacob and He hated Esau. One was taken and the other was left.

That is the truth that the Apostle is enforcing here. He is dealing with the strange fact that Israel has been set aside from its high place, and is in danger of becoming God's castaway. He is defending the justice of God's moral sovereignty. We sometimes read these profound words of Paul as though they meant that God was making capricious, unreasonable, immoral distinctions between man and man. We ought to be ashamed to entertain these thoughts about Paul when we read his impassioned cry, 'Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved.' What Paul is showing is that God chooses nations and men, and He rejects nations and men, governed always by their fitness to carry out a high moral purpose. He refused Ishmael and set His mind on Isaac. He chose Israel that she might bring in the Kingdom of God, and now He had rejected her because she refused His purpose. So He chose Jacob and rejected Esau.

[1] *John Stuart Holden, A Book of Remembrance,* 20.

God's Difficulties

Rom. ix. 17.—'For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, For this very purpose did I raise thee up, that I might shew in thee my power' (R.V.).

THERE is nothing in the story of the Old Testament to suggest that anyone was responsible for the experience of Israel in Egypt save God only. 'Fear not to go down into Egypt' are the words which Jacob recognizes as an intimation of the Divine will. For him, as for his father Abraham, one step was enough. The famine was sore in the land. And in Egypt there was corn, gathered by the wise providence of his own brilliant son.

In those rough times the treachery of Judah and his brothers, wicked though it might be, was not altogether without excuse. Genius is often insufferable in its early stages, and virtue is not always recommended by precocity. Joseph would not have been exactly loved, if his lot had been cast in one of the public schools of modern England. But, whatever punishment their cruelty and deceit may have deserved, it was under Joseph's protection that the patriarchal family was at last comfortably settled in the Land of Goshen. What is prominent in the Book of Genesis is the Divine ordering of events, and this is recognized by Joseph himself. 'God sent me before you' are the words which he addresses to his conscience-stricken brethren, 'to preserve life.' And the 105th Psalm ascribes the whole story of the descent into Egypt, not to the consequences of sin, but to the working of Divine Providence.

1. What, then, does Egypt stand for in the accomplishment of God's designs? Through no fault of their own, through no unfaithfulness to the mind and will of the heavenly Father concerning them, this race with its promise of a great future, its hope of a high destiny, is subjected to the grinding tyranny of a remorseless civilization. Into their soul the iron entered, but no prince of the people let them go free. Why, if the God of Israel be He who rules all things, did He not attain His end by a road less rough, a way less painful for the feet of His

saints than one which, like the old paths of the slave-raider in Central Africa, was strewn with dead bodies and bleaching bones?

We must beware of suburban views of God. The last thing that we ought to think of revelation is that it will make the story of the world and the experience of life easy. There is a grave danger lest we should be blind to the lessons of history. The welfare of a nation is not necessarily bound up with the mitigation of immediate suffering. In times of stress and difficulty we may learn a great deal from what the Bible has to tell us about the sorrows of Israel in Egypt.

What in the history of God's people is the meaning of Pharaoh? St Paul, slightly paraphrasing the text of the Old Testament, gives the answer. The words he cites were addressed to Menephtah, the Pharaoh of the Exodus. 'For this very purpose did I raise thee up, that I might shew in thee my power.' But how can this be? If you can crush a serpent's head only by allowing it to bruise your heel, surely this is something less than omnipotence.

¶ Brought to Cairo in 1900, the mummy of Menephtah was left undisturbed until 8th July 1907, when it was unrolled. Here are the words of one who was present: 'As the deft hands continued their task, one watched with an all-pervading curiosity for the countenance of Pharaoh to be laid bare. What manner of man was he? What was he like? Little by little the head and face came to view, and soon they lay before us in all their nakedness, upturned to the ceiling. There are many faces which accord but ill with the character of the men as we know them. Not so Pharaoh. No plebeian face is his. The clean-shaven head in its long sweep; the high, arched nose almost hawk-like in its lines; the long, lean jaw and thin-cut mouth—they were all there. The eyes alone, which might in some passing gleam of kindliness have tempered that iron jaw and that stubborn mouth, were absent. Pharaoh as he is depicted in Exodus lay on the table in the Cairo museum.'

2. Most of the difficulties that beset men's minds with regard to God arise out of constructing Him in their own image before they will consent to seek Him in His actual working. The provincial freethinker constructs an enlarged portrait of himself, and has then no difficulty in proving that such a personality does not exist. When the day comes that we shall know as we are known, shall we not be amazed at our own views of God, at what seemed to us to be the meaning of omnipotence, at what we thought were the necessities of a boundless love?

We ought to bring the same frame of mind to the study of the ways of God as that in which we approach all other branches of knowledge. When we are engaged in the pursuit of positive science, it is not the essential nature of the facts that we examine. What they are in themselves is a mystery that eludes our method of inquiry. What we do wish to learn is the best means of acting upon them. In other words, it is the destiny and not the origin of the universe that is the proper subject of human investigation. If God be Life—conscious, purposeful, personal Life—how do we know what obstacles He may not have had to encounter in the earlier stages of His creative activity? How do we know that self-realization in matter may not have encompassed Him with limitations not altogether unlike those which, as experience shows, have been imposed upon us? How do we know that a universe could have been summoned into existence in which conflict with evil was not the essential condition of the establishment of the Kingdom of God? Of the answer of these questions we know nothing. For all minds alike clouds and darkness surround the origin of things. It is not in the annihilation of difficulty, but in the bending of difficulty to the accomplishment of His victorious Will that we see the salvation of God.

The Bible is the record of God's victorious working amid the actual conditions of the world's development. The universe is God's great opportunity, as it is ours. Ask those emancipated Israelites whether they would be without one hour of that harsh captivity. Ask Miriam and her jubilant dancers whether they do not understand the place of Pharaoh in the purposes of God. Amid the clash of the timbrels the answer comes: 'Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.'

3. We can understand God's triumph in history, because it is a human victory. 'In all their affliction he was afflicted,' cried the great prophet of the Exile, 'and the angel of his presence saved them.' It is when, sharing our risks and bearing our sorrows, He becomes our

Redeemer, that we become aware of the mighty fact that God is our Father. What is the spiritual significance of the Temptation of Jesus Christ but this? It clinches and brings to a supreme issue what has been suggested all down the pages of revelation. Our God is a human God. When Jesus is tempted to make stones bread, or perhaps to doubt His own prerogative of Deity, we miss the whole force of the evil suggestion if we set in sharp contrast the Godhead and the Manhood of the Saviour. We think of God as one to whom it would be quite natural to make stones bread, and we think of the kingdoms of this world as belonging to the Almighty without any effort on His part to win them. But surely there is something extraordinarily mechanical and unreal about the taking of the Manhood into God, if it is only thus that we can represent it to ourselves. To separate the Godhead of Christ from His Manhood is a task as impossible as it is unnecessary. The earthly story which culminated in the Cross is the last and fullest exposition of the Humanity of God. If we are made in God's image then God is like us. Our conception of His power must never make us think of Him as some superior genie, who builds enchanted palaces. God has His difficulties. That is how He is ever represented in the Bible, and no consideration of the mystery that surrounds His existence should rob us of the wondrous picture of a personal, living God. If 'men may rise on stepping-stones of their dead selves to higher things,' can we not understand how this process may correspond to something in the very heart of God? It is of the very essence of personal life to be lifted on the waves of difficulty to the accomplishment of its purposes. Difficulty is the means of salvation. For us as we encounter the storms of life, what gives us courage—a man's courage—with which to grapple the tempest is the Presence in the boat.

The difficulties of God are consummated on Calvary. Men have always found the Cross a cause of offence. That God should die, that the last great obstacle to the development of their own lives should reappear in the history of God, seems to them scandalous indeed. They imagine that somehow we should be able to accept the declaration that God is love, that He forgives iniquity and sin, though the declaration had no relation whatever to the fact of Golgotha. Tell us the Parable of the Prodigal Son, and we want nothing further than that touching story to make us arise and go to our Father.

But we cannot separate the story from Him who told it. Love has not proved itself to the uttermost till it has broken every barrier down. In the world as we know it love must encounter dangers, it must wrestle with death, if it is to reach the fullness of its glorious perfection. O Cross, O Tree of suffering and of glory, this is the word which the Lord hath spoken of thee: 'For this very purpose did I raise thee up, that I might shew in thee the power of my prevailing love.'

¶ I read once—I forget where, but it was on a bookstall and I think in French—a tale of how the Son of God, victorious over death, was ascending through the regions of heaven to His glorious Father, and, as He passed along, one of the highest angels ventured to accost Him and to say, 'My Lord, the great Design, the inauguration of Thy Kingdom on the earth, is it all finished?' And Jesus said, 'It is finished!' The angel said, 'My Lord, I have been sent elsewhere, I have heard nothing: dare I ask what Thou hast done?' Jesus replied, 'I was known as the child of respectable working folk, I lived unnoticed for some thirty years, then I came forward for a few months and talked with men and women of all sorts, and I think some of those who listened will be influenced all their lives, some fishermen, some petty tradesmen, some women good and bad. And in the end enemies had Me executed.' 'My Lord, my Lord,' exclaimed the angel in horror, 'What, was there no other way?' 'No,' said Jesus, '*there was no other way.*'[1]

The Potter and the Clay

Rom. ix. 21.—'Hath not the potter power over the clay?'

It is an old, familiar, prophetic image which St Paul uses here, as he applies to the relation between the human life and God the metaphor of the potter and the clay. Jeremiah and Isaiah both had found in this striking metaphor something like a clue to the perpetual riddle of human character and fortune and discipline and destiny. We remember how Jeremiah went down, as he tells us, to the potter's house, and

[1] F. C. Burkitt.

watched his hands busy about the moving wheels, and saw him take a piece of clay, which had been spoilt as he was making it up into a particular kind of vessel, and remodel it into something else; and how, as he stood entranced by the spectacle of the workman's subtlety and skill, he heard, as in a dream, a Divine voice that said: 'Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.' In human art, stamping its own imperious will on the responsive material, the prophet sees a significant illustration of God's absolute power in dealing with national life. Or we remember, again, more than one passage of Isaiah in which the same penetrating thought shines out; passages in which he pleads for resignation to the Divine will, or calls upon God to reveal Himself in His omnipotence. 'We are the clay,' he cries, 'and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.' It was by teachers such as these that St Paul was inspired, as he argued for the admission of Gentile as well as Jew into the Church of Christ; declared, as it were, the absolute right of the Maker to do as He would to the thing made; and poured out his fiery, indignant questions on the Roman converts: 'O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay?'

1. The metaphor implies, first, that the world has had a spiritual origin, and came to be what it is by the action of a spiritual agency. As the clay, under the potter's touch, takes the impress of a human mind and will, so it is Mind which created and governs the world, and reaches 'through nature, moulding men.' There are moods in which we are inclined to see in the world nothing but a vast, dead, whirling machine, driven on by pitiless, iron laws, and carrying us and all about us round and round in a mad, meaningless rush and roar, until the fires that once set it in motion shall at last have burnt themselves out. Perhaps we have been touched by the sadness, the cruelty, or the waste of human life. We have seen, it may be, a good man's life wrecked for no apparent cause or fault of his own, while vice goes on its prosperous way unpunished and unabashed. Moments have come in our own life or in the lives of others when we thought that God *must* speak, and God has been silent; when we thought that God must interfere, and no sign has been given in the white blank of the heavens above. And then, perhaps, our tangled and haunting thoughts have shaped themselves at last into one clear question: 'Is there, indeed, behind it all, a God who hears and knows and listens and judges; or am I bound by some blind, stupid force to the wheels of life, in chains that never can be broken because there is no one to break them or to hear my cry?'

It is not irreligious or immoral, as some may suppose, to ask such questions; the circumstances of life may compel us to ask them. Indeed, it may be almost a part of our faith and hope that we *should* ask them. You are the clay, St Paul would tell us; thinking clay, not senseless and inert—that is the difference; but you, too, are as the clay in this, that you do not know the Potter's will or what He is working for. And there we touch the centre of the Christian position. Christianity has never believed in a God who can be readily understood or whose ways are plain. 'Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself,' 'his ways are past finding out'—such are the expressions of men whose faith in the Divine government of the world never faltered. They believed in God none the less because of the enigmas and perplexities that lay about them. If the world were indeed the product of a blind, unconscious force, surely, in the myriad years that have passed over this earth of ours since it blossomed into organic life, men would have found out the simple truth about it long ago, and would be troubled no longer, as even the most dogmatic materialist is still troubled, by the

> Blank misgivings of a creature
> Moving about in worlds not realized.

But, if the temporary contradictions of the world are actually, as Christianity affirms, part and parcel of God's deliberate plan, and He makes indistinct the traces of His handiwork just because He is aiming at faith and courage in the human soul, and at a moral development and education and discipline which could not otherwise be attained, then we may fairly ask whether, given such conditions, we should not expect to see exactly such a world as that in which we live—a world whose larger ends obviously lie outside the scope of human thought to fathom or interpret.

¶ We see His working and we sorrow: the end of His counsel and working both hidden, and underneath the ground, and therefore we cannot believe. Even amongst men, we see hewn stones, timber, and a hundred scattered parcels and pieces of our house, all under-tools, hammers, and axes, and saws; yet the house, the beauty and the use of so many lodgings and ease-rooms, we neither see nor understand for the present; these are but in the mind and heart of the builder as yet. We see red earth, unbroken clods, furrows, and stones; but we see not summer, lilies, roses, the beauty of a garden.[1]

Turn, turn, my wheel! This earthen jar
A touch can make, a touch can mar;
And shall it to the Potter say,
What makest thou? Thou hast no hand?
As men who think to understand
A world by their Creator planned,
Who wiser is than they.[2]

2. But St Paul's metaphor goes still further, by showing us how irresistible is the Power which has called the universe into being. We sometimes see a man going out into life with a buoyant self-confidence. He will be the master of his fortunes. Circumstances shall bend this way or that as he chooses. Persons, events, all that happens—his own gifts and character and opportunities—all shall work together as he may decide. Presently he finds that life is not what he anticipated. Circumstances seem to shut him in; things turn out hard and stubborn, and refuse to obey him; his very character begins to look as if it were determined for him by somebody or something not himself. He is the clay; he lies helpless; and invisible hands do with him what they will. A strange power—is it God, or Fate, or Destiny?—envelops him, and shapes him he knows not how. Driven by some of the tendencies of modern thought, he flies perhaps to an extreme. As he contemplates the reign of universal law, he asks what else he can be but a puppet and a slave, with no more real liberty than a stone tossed by the sea or a leaf blown by the wind; and as he traces the secret and subtle influences of heredity for good or evil in character and life, he feels that he is after all a mere product of the past, irresponsible for what he does and powerless to be other than what he is.

[1] Samuel Rutherford. [2] Longfellow.

With all this St Paul is so far in agreement that he does seek to emphasize the supremacy of the Divine will. Doubtless he would have said that, great as is the part played by heredity in human affairs, yet each of us is conscious of being a new individual self—something more, that is, than the result of what has been before; that each of us is conscious of free will and personal responsibility, and cannot help showing that he is, by approving or condemning, by punishing or rewarding, the conduct of others. But St Paul did not much care for metaphysical argument; he was concerned rather with the moral aspects of the problem. Whatever gifts or powers, he would have said, God may have permitted you or may have withheld, be sure that His will is the best for you, that He sees more clearly than you the vessel that His hands are fashioning.

When the potter takes up the formless clay he knows into what kind of vessel he means to shape it; and every touch and turn, every stress of sharp tool or pressure of flying wheel, contributes something to the result; and to each and every several piece of work the potter gives his whole power of ingenuity and care.

May it not be so with the Divine fashioning of our own life? If modern science has done anything for religion it is that it has killed for ever the conception of a God who, once in time, set the worlds rolling through space, and then left them to work out their own destinies apart from Himself, and compels us to believe in a God present everywhere, an all-sustaining, all-embracing energy, who knows no difference between the little and the great, and watches the sparrow in its fall as closely as the nation in its decay. So all the circumstances of life, the disappointments and frustrated hopes, the stress of joys and sorrows, the events of birth, and education, and marriage, and business, and death—all may be meant to carry out the Potter's design for each of us, and to model us after the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

¶ If men would but believe that they are in process of creation, and consent to be made—let the maker handle them as the potter his clay, yielding themselves in respondent motion and submissive hopeful action with the turning of the wheel, they would ere long find themselves able to welcome every pressure of that hand upon them, even when it was felt in pain,

and sometimes not only to believe but to recognize the divine end in view, the bringing of a son into glory.[1]

So we can look up at the hands that are at work about us with something of the joyous triumph of the poet:

> But I need, now as then,
> Thee, God, who mouldest men;
> And since, not even while the whirl was worst,
> Did I,—to the wheel of life
> With shapes and colours rife,
> Bound dizzily,—mistake my end, to slake Thy thirst:
>
> So, take and use Thy work:
> Amend what flaws may lurk,
> What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!
> My times be in Thy hand!
> Perfect the cup as planned!
> Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same!

Goodness without Trying

Rom. x. 4.—'Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.'

1. Christianity sets a mark before its adherents and urges them to press toward it continually. The mark, as St Paul expresses it, is the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. But that fact is one of the main difficulties which Christianity encounters in the minds of men. The mark, they say, is too high. It makes demands on them which human nature can hardly be expected to meet, and though some elect souls do meet them, the man of affairs, busy at all times, and with a mind necessarily preoccupied, has not leisure to be (as the phrase goes) 'an earnest Christian.' The young, moreover, with life opening up before them in all its rich promise, can hardly be expected to take kindly to a religion whose motto is the Cross, whose demand is a self-denial that may involve cutting off the right hand and plucking out the right eye. There is no denying the beauty of the Christian character as it is portrayed in the New Testament. Even the critics of the faith have most willingly admitted that; but the objection to it is that it would require a man's whole time to attain to excellence in it, and that only a few are so constituted as to attain excellence even at that cost. Only consider, they say, what virtues have to be practised, what duties have to be performed, what worthy and honourable interests and pursuits have to be forgone; human nature would require to be immolated before the Christian standard could be reached.

The answer to all this is that Christianity, as interpreted by St Paul, has nothing to do with laws and regulations. It demands no virtues and prescribes no duties. All the while it is aiming at the highest perfection of character and life—nothing less than the perfection of God and the likeness of Christ—and thereby at the fulfilment of all moral and spiritual demands made by God or man. It claims to have the secret of how the perfect life can be lived. But the path to it is not that of obeying commandments and keeping rules. The Christian does not screw himself up to the fulfilment of hard tasks, or to the fighting against a hundred unseen enemies, or the killing out of a hundred natural impulses, or even one. His ultimate goal is the holiness of God; but God is not reached by fighting, or climbing, or killing off his natural affections. Do not let us be shocked at this as if it were immoral; St Paul was the last man in the world to lower the standard of morality; his whole endeavour was to lift morality to a higher level.

2. In the text St Paul flashes out one of those penetrating sentences of his which go to the heart of things. 'Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.' In the preceding verse the Apostle has been contrasting the two ways of obtaining righteousness—the one by faith, and the other by means of keeping laws. Then comes this verse, 'Christ is the end of law,' that is, has brought about the termination of law. In Colossians he puts the same truth in another way: 'Christ has blotted out the bond retained in ordinances—hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross.' Christ has killed law—not merely Mosaic ceremonies and sacrifices, but also all kinds of law: ceremonies, most certainly, as a means of reaching out to God; and as certainly, moral laws as a means of attaining pardon and perfection.

[1] George Macdonald.

Here and there one meets with writings of eminent men in which Christianity is described as a higher and purer morality than the world had hitherto seen. This, they say, is its distinction. In their view God is still making moral demands upon us, and judging us according to our compliance with them or not. For example, in a short study of Cardinal Newman reference is made to this. 'Evangelical as his early training had been, Newman looked at Evangelical religion from without. The terrors of the law held him. He believed, but "joy and peace in believing" were not his. In his sermons fear is a more prominent motive than love: God is presented rather as a centre of dogma than as a loving Father; the Gospel is not so much a message of salvation as a menace of judgment to come. He looked at Christianity as a creed—which it is not; and demanded from it a system—which it does not possess. The conception of religion as a vital process, a thing living in and with the life of the race and the individual, was one which he never reached.' [1]

This freedom from the fear of breaking God's commandments or of not fulfilling the duties which He requires of us is the freedom which St Paul has brought to men. In W. M. Macgregor's words concerning him: 'He now knew the joy of thinking thoughts, and giving himself up to sentiments and energies which were his own. His life ran out untrammelled, with nothing of mere imitation about it. This freedom from men brought others with it, for when a man is right he is much more right than he thinks; he had freedom in God's presence also; for fear had gone, and life and sonship had taken its place. God no longer talked to him as a master, issuing bare commands, but as a friend. And there was freedom from sin; for though he was not yet done with it the fetters seemed broken, and, running in the way of God's commandments, he was leaving the life of servitude behind.'

This difference is finely brought out in the Apostle's expression: 'The law was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.' The 'schoolmaster' referred to was a tutor, not a teacher. Nor was he one who conducted the boy to and from school, although he might do that too. He was a slave who watched the boy, walked with him, corrected him, pulled him up, pouring out endless little admonitions about his behaviour. How intolerable that must have become as the boy grew into manhood, and how glad he must have been to escape from it. That was St Paul's figure for the law. The law had been that kind of tutor to the Apostle, and could be nothing more to the soul. Escape from it came to the Apostle in friendship with Christ, and comes to us all through Him. And this freedom was joy.

3. But what of the perfect life? It is attained and can be attained only in a spirit, a personal devotion, a love for God. At the heart of this Universe, in all its majesty and mystery, there resides, not a moral imperative which we must at our peril obey, but a Holy Father whom it is our joy to please, and who helps us in our efforts to please Him, and in our failures. As the prophet said: 'The law' must be written 'in the heart'; so that the good life is not something imposed upon us from without, but the walking in a way that is our own as well as God's. Our trust in God, our attachment to Him, has made us one in heart and mind with Him, and we are at home with Him as sons are with their father.

This identification of a man with a law which is above him, and at the same time within him, is familiar enough; as, for instance, in the work of an artist. An artist does not walk or talk or judge Nature by a system of artistic rules, he does not pull himself up from time to time with warnings, such as: 'But I must be artistic!' 'That was scarcely in keeping with my art.' He is artistic by nature, thinks his own thoughts quite naturally, and they reveal the artist. He no more assumes it than a happy man assumes happiness, pinching himself and saying: 'Now show happiness.'

¶ Dr Keate, who was headmaster at Eton College in 1809 and whose partiality for the birch became a byword, had a famous sermon on purity of heart in which he said: 'It's your duty to be pure in heart. If you are not pure in heart, I'll flog you.'

It is the possession of the spirit of Christ that changes us into the likeness of Christ. Kindness is not a rule of duty which Christians are on the watch to observe. It is the glad spontaneous impulse of a heart that has experienced the kindness of Christ. We no more put on a love for God in obedience to an order (we could not if we tried) than we put on love for our

[1] A. Fawkes, *Studies in Modernism*, 29.

children because strangers are present. Christianity is a spirit, continually growing in power within the Christian mind, advancing and applying itself to all the vicissitudes of life. It lays hold of the man who surrenders himself to it, it lifts him out of the thraldom of sin and the slavish fear of sinning, and moulds him and his whole activity with delight into the likeness of Christ.

Love unbinds the loveless fetters which for
Duty's sake we wore;
Love is life, transmuting service into freedom
evermore.

Not at first learn we this lesson, earnest-hearted
though we be,
After wrestling in the darkness, lo! the light
comes and we see;
As of old when Sinai's thunder left the people
dying still,
Then the Son said, 'Oh, My Father, I delight to
do Thy will!'

And in that sublime obedience every discord is
resolved,
And by it I think the secret of humanity is
solved:
Slaves no longer, though we gird us for the
fight of duty still,
We have tasted now the freedom of the Father's
lovely will.[1]

The Simplicity of Faith

Rom. x. 6-8.—'But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach.'

Whatever difficulty the commentator may find in this adoption by St Paul of the words of the great lawgiver, the general idea of both passages is clear. It is that God lays on man no impossible task; religion and morality are not so hidden that they cannot be known, or so inaccessible that they cannot be reached. The things necessary for life and salvation are to be found in the familiar round of life, in our very selves: 'the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.'

1. In all ages humanity has conceived religion as a great mystery to be discovered only by searching heaven and earth. Moses found that idea in his day. We find it as surely in ours. It takes three main forms among ourselves.

(1) At the one extreme we have the superstitious form, *Spiritualism*. Not satisfied with the revelation God has given us in Scripture, some think they can themselves discover a better revelation. To them the word is very far away, hidden in the almost inaccessible region of another world. Let any sane man, however, compare the revelations thus gained with that word of Scripture which is nigh us, even in mouth and heart, and decide which is the more valuable towards right living.

¶ 'The records of spiritualism,' said Mr Augustine Birrell, 'leave me unconvinced. They lack grandeur. They deal with petty things. A revelation of a life beyond the grave ought surely to be more stupendous than that—something of really first-class importance. Otherwise we are just as well without it.'

(2) Then there is the scientific form. The *science* of our day virtually says that the word is not nigh us. It raises doubt about every question, moral and religious. It declares that we must search heaven and earth before we can be sure of anything. It returns from its own search and says, 'If there be a God, we have not found him in the heavens above or on the earth beneath.' If you appeal to your own heart, and say the word is there, 'What,' science says, 'is your own heart?—what your conscience, your soul? Is there any soul? The atoms which compose you *de*compose, and the soul—if there be one—may perish with them.' Thus, with all its great services to mankind, science makes religion hard and inaccessible to many.

(3) Again, this truth is denied by a widespread search among *the religions of the world*. When Moses said, 'Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us?' he meant to warn the Israelites against imagining they could import a better religion from some distant land.

Now, not a few of us seek some better religion

[1] J. E. Livock, *Songs and Lyrics of the Inner Life*, 39.

overseas ; or at least spend time comparing the religions of various nations with one another and with Christianity. The study of comparative religions, of course, is of importance and value. Christianity has nothing to fear from comparison, which may even help to reveal its inherent truth. Nevertheless, the practical effect of a constant searching among distant religions is to make our own religion distant as they are ; and we end feeling that all are equally good—equally near, equally far.

2. Is religion, then, a hard, distant, inaccessible thing ? The spiritualist says we must wait till a path is discovered between this world and the next ; the scientist, till science has explored heaven and earth ; the student of comparative religion, till all religions are examined and compared ; the theologian, till we assent to the mysteries of doctrine ; the higher critic, till he has settled all problems of authorship, dates, texts, and so forth.

Is it credible that God has made the great things of religion and morality so desperately hard to know ? We still believe that Moses is right when he declares : 'This commandment which I command thee this day, it is not too hard (wonderful) for thee, neither is it far off. . . . But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.' We do not need to wait till all questions in heaven and earth are solved before we begin to live aright.

(1) The word of God is so nigh that *it is in our own hearts*. We draw a distinction between natural and revealed religion. Nevertheless, the great fundamental truths of revealed religion are also those of natural religion. God in the Bible does not approach us with a set of truths and commands entirely foreign to our nature. They are already in our hearts ; some sense of right and wrong responds to them ; the soul within us is made on the same plan. Take the two commandments which our Lord singled out as those on which hang all the Law and the Prophets : 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind . . . and thy neighbour as thyself' : is there not something in the human heart which recognizes these as right and reasonable ? We may indeed *argue* ourselves into thinking that no God exists ; but far beneath all argument there lives in every human soul something which says, 'God is, and God is good and worthy to be loved.'

(2) Again, it is nigh us by *the very construction of our daily life*, 'that we may do it.' For, however perplexing the intellectual problems of our day may be, the great circle of human experience remains the same in all ages—the common joys and sorrows, love and friendship, daily work, helpfulness to those who need our help. These things are not far off—the word of daily duty is very nigh us, in the work to which we rise morning by morning, in the duties to our fellows which living with them inevitably brings. No man need excuse himself by saying he must wait till all questions are cleared up by scientists, scholars, theologians. All the great duties of life are at our very doors—simple things which we pass by because they are too simple. 'He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good ; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ?'

From his high sycamore with straining eyes
He sought a glimpse of Him whose fair renown
His spirit knew ; but, lo, beneath his feet,
One called to him : 'Come down !'
From high theologies with straining eyes
We seek for God ; but, from the busy town,
From market-place and old familiar street,
One calls to us : 'Come down !'[1]

(3) And it is nigh us in this also—that *all that is necessary for obedience is faith*. St Paul in Romans says that 'the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise.' Now, faith in Christ is to some a word by no means nigh them, and this because they quite misunderstand what faith is. They think it means a clear mental understanding of the great doctrines which gather round Christ : the Incarnation—the union in Him of Humanity and Divinity—the Trinity—the meaning of His Death and Resurrection. Faith, however, is not clear knowledge, but trust. Here is a child just beginning to think. His little mind is greatly puzzled about his father—he does not understand why he goes to business, or what business is, or where it is. Imagine the child saying : 'I can have no faith in my father until I under-

[1] Reginald G. Eva.

stand all his life; I cannot trust him until I clear up to my own mind those things in his conduct which perplex me.' No child is so foolish as that; yet grown men say precisely this about Christ—they cannot trust Him until they understand Him completely.

¶ When the birds one day—in a beautiful story of Mr Warde Fowler's—were discussing the nature and character of man, they were much puzzled by him. They thought him harsh and difficult to understand—all but one bird. At the end of the debate the swallow, spreading its wings to fly up into the boundless air, said, 'We live by love and trust. As for understanding, that will come afterwards.' [1]

When we demand the solution of all problems before we will believe too often the real reason is some moral unwillingness to be convinced. Faith is no such hard task as we make out—it is the virtue of all humble and childlike souls, who trust goodness when they see it. And just because faith is not the conquering of all mysteries, because it is the quiet trust of a child believing where it cannot know, therefore 'the word is nigh thee even in thy mouth, and in thy heart.'

Everything of real value is very near to us—in those moral and religious instincts which are inborn in every human soul, in those familiar duties which lie at our feet, in that simple trust in Christ, which is possible to every childlike heart.

Confessing Christ

Rom. x. 9.—'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.'

1. *The Place and Importance of Confession.*—It is the confession of Christ that is brought before us in these words, and the text says three very striking things about it: First, it is necessary to salvation. 'If thou shalt confess . . . thou shalt be saved.' Second, it puts it on the same level as faith, as a condition of salvation. 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.' Third, it puts it in front of faith as a condition of salvation. 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.'

The text states that confession is essential to salvation, and nothing almost needs to be added to that. If there be anything that is essential to human salvation, then it is something about which every intelligent human being ought to be concerned. It is put on the same level as faith as a condition of salvation. Now, that is a very surprising thing. We know what stress is put upon faith in the Bible, how it is exalted, and here is confession lifted up and put beside it. As Protestants we all hold that we are to be saved by faith alone. How, then, is it that in this text confession is put on a level with faith as if it were an additional condition of salvation? Still more difficult to understand is the third point, that here confession is put in front of faith as a condition of salvation. You would have expected that if it was to be placed in combination with faith, at all events it would follow instead of preceding it. How can any man confess until he has believed?

Confession is a part of faith. It is not something additional, but something involved in faith. In other parts of Scripture it is made perfectly clear that there are different kinds of faith—there is genuine faith and there is counterfeit faith. St James speaks about a faith that is dead and which cannot save. How are we to distinguish the genuine faith that saves from counterfeit faith which is not able to save? One characteristic of it is this: true faith always confesses. When faith is genuine there is at the heart of it an irresistible impulse to confess, and the genuineness of faith is tested by this impulse coming to the surface and asserting itself. That is why confession is here put as a condition of salvation side by side with faith.

But how are we to explain the other difficulty which is a much greater one, that in the text confession is put in front of faith? It does not say, 'Thou shalt believe and confess,' but 'if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God has raised him from the dead.' Must we not believe with the heart before we can confess with the mouth? Surely faith is first and confession second—that would seem to be good logic. Why, then, should confession be put first? It is for a very pathetic reason. We have all got a certain amount of logic in us, but we have a

[1] A. F. W. Ingram, *Banners of the Christian Faith*, 17.

great many other things in us besides logic, and God has to deal with us, not only as logical beings, but as the beings we are. And what He knows about us is this: that when a man sees that what he needs to do for salvation is to believe on the Saviour and then confess Him, although the believing logically comes first, actually the confession may be uppermost in his thought, and it may be that he has to make up his mind about that before he can go on to the other.

2. *The Reasons for Confession.*—There is no doubt that confession is the point at which multitudes stumble. When they are brought to the point when they are called upon to confess the Saviour, they turn back. Now, if it is so difficult why does God insist upon it? What are the reasons why He places confession in this place of prominence and importance? There are three reasons: Confession is necessary for our own sake, for the sake of others, and for His sake.

(1) *For our Own Sakes.*—Our missionaries who work in India tell us that in that country there is a large and most interesting class consisting of those who have gone through our mission schools and colleges, with the result that the hold of their native religion has been thoroughly relaxed. They have given up faith in pagan deities. They believe the religion of Christ, and have been deeply impressed with its principles, but they hold back from baptism, from a public confession of Christ. No doubt they deserve great consideration, because the social constitution of India, the domestic network in which they are involved, is a very peculiar thing, from which it is exceedingly difficult to escape; and yet is it not evident that these people will never be morally strong unless they take the step which the Saviour has imposed upon all who believe on Him? And yet there is far more to be said for them than can be said for us who, even at the worst, have not difficulties worthy to be spoken of in the same breath with theirs.

¶ Dr Miller, of the Church Missionary Society, whose unique work in Northern Nigeria is well known, tells this story: 'The son of one of the richest men in Zaria who was a learned assistant judge, Mijin Yawa first came to my notice as a lad of twelve through a very severe accident to his face from the kick of a horse. He recovered and we became fast friends. For some time I had to prevent him from coming to school because of his father's protests, and it was a great conquest when the old man himself, won by the boy's greatly improved character, gave his consent. One Sunday afternoon in 1916, while I was reading, I heard a voice close by: "I have made up my mind to be a Christian, and I want to be baptized." The speaker was Mijin Yawa.

'"Do you know what is involved? Your father will disinherit you. As a Christian you could not inherit under Moslem law."

'"I know. I don't mind that."

'A year or two later in a football match against a European team he played full-back for us. Later I heard from one of the players, a first-class forward and a league member in England, how much impressed he had been by this boy's character and skill on the football field. Since then Mijin Yawa has been employed by the United Africa Company, for which he is still working. I keep in touch with him, and in a recent letter telling of his father's death he said: "The alkali has wired to ask, in connexion with the inheritance, what religion I profess. I felt I had now the chance of either refusing Christ or confessing Him openly a second time. I replied by wire: 'Religion profess Christianity.'"'

A man cannot be religious, in any true and adequate sense, without committing himself. His natural unwillingness to give himself away must be overcome if he would be a genuine disciple of Jesus Christ. There must be a crossing of the Rubicon. A secret acceptance of Christ will not suffice to make him a Christian. He must 'set to his seal.' As someone has said, he must not only go in for Christ, but come out for Christ.

Art thou in earnest? Seize this present minute;
What you can do, or dream you can, begin it!
Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it.
Only engage, and then the mind grows heated.
Begin it, and the work is half completed.

(2) *For the Sake of Others.*—It has pleased God to make the saving of men dependent on the work and activity of those who are already saved, and there is no single part of that work more important or more fruitful in results than the open confession 'with the mouth' of the authority and love of the Lord Jesus Christ. It

is sometimes said that it is harder to live for Christ than to speak about Him, but the statement is far from being universally true. There may be some who find little or no difficulty in speaking for Jesus to those who know Him not, but the greater number of Christian people know only too well how difficult a task it is to say anything to others of what is deepest and most sacred in their own hearts; and the difficulty grows greater and not less when they have to speak to those nearest and dearest to them.

And yet, difficult as the task is, it must be done if we are to 'save some.' We can never tell how much may depend on our faithfulness and courage in the discharge of this duty. The most momentous of issues may sometimes hang on a word, and that a word we either speak or fail to speak.

¶ A story is told of Dr Chalmers, that on one occasion he spent an evening with a distinguished company, and the conversation was, as might have been expected, brilliant and delightful. At length the company retired to rest, but at midnight Chalmers was aroused by a cry in the house. One of the guests had collapsed and died suddenly. It is said that Chalmers, on hearing the terrible news, went back to his room in an agony of sorrow and self-reproach that he had allowed the whole evening to pass by without speaking one word for Christ. And now it was too late!

¶ 'More than thirty years ago,' says Canon Peter Green, 'I knew a young man who was handsome, rich, and successful. But he had been brought up in a home where God was never named. He married a girl of whom you could say exactly the same. Young, pretty, good at games, popular with her friends, and possessed of a large private fortune, she had had absolutely no religious training. To the astonishment of all their friends, they were no sooner married than they began going regularly to church; when children were born they were religiously brought up; a happier marriage no one could have desired. Nearly five-and-twenty years after the marriage the man gave me the explanation. When the young couple came back from their honeymoon, a friend called on them who had a very real religion of her own. There, in the drawing-room of that great wealthy house, she spoke to them. She said that every family has three pillars: God, Father, and Mother. Take away Father, and everyone pities the poor widow; take away Mother, and a man left without a wife and with young children to look after is even more to be pitied. Ah! but take away God! That, she declared, was the really unhappy home. So she begged them to make God the chief pillar of their home; and before she left she knelt and prayed for them. The man said to me, "You know, that was the first time in my life that anyone ever spoke to me about God, or as if I had a soul, or as if religion mattered."'

(3) *For Christ's Sake.*—He expects it of us. In days like ours, when doubt is so fashionable and religious enthusiasm is considered to be bad form, Christ Himself appeals to each man and woman who believes in Him. He lays it on our consciences to confess Him before those who are denying Him daily by their cynical talk and their sensational pleasures and the money-worship of their lives. Christ still goes despised and rejected and unpopular, and He claims those who love Him as His champions. He calls us to join Him frankly and openly, to identify ourselves with His cause on earth, and especially to take our places in His Church and at His Table. The question, 'What shall I render unto the Lord?' must include in its answer: 'I will pay my vows in the presence of all His people.' And the New Testament warns us again and again how Christ relies on the witness of our thankful hearts, and requires of us that we glorify Him on earth by our daily confession of His redeeming love.

Lord, Thou needest not, I know,
  Service such as I can bring;
Yet I long to prove and show
  Full allegiance to my King.
Thou an honour art to me;
Let me be a praise to Thee.

Belief in the Resurrection

Rom. x. 9, 10.—'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation' (R.V.).

THESE two conditions of salvation are really but one, for the confession with the mouth of Christ's Lordship must follow as by a natural necessity the believing with the heart that Christ has been raised from the dead. 'Out

of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh,' said Christ Himself, and all experience confirms His utterance. We may, then, without serious loss, confine our thoughts to that heart's belief in Christ's resurrection which, St Paul tells us, is 'unto righteousness,' and draws in its train 'salvation.'

1. 'If thou shalt believe in thy heart.' The faith which may be thus described is clearly something widely different from that conclusion of the intellect which creates assent, ranging from the faintest consciousness of probability to an unfaltering assurance of truth. No demonstration effected by the intellect at work upon the evidences could properly compel 'righteousness,' and recreate the character into the likeness of Christ. The powerlessness of the intellect to control the life is one of the postulates of the moralists, and is writ large on many a shameful record of individual failure and public scandal. It is very manifest that a saving faith in the Lord's resurrection cannot be merely intellectual. When we examine the process by which in the first instance that faith was created, we can see that there was nothing of the nature of examination of evidence, balancing of probabilities, careful checking of statements, cautious inference from facts. The Apostles did not argue, they affirmed. 'We have seen the Lord,' and the work which, in the power of that vision, they were able to project and accomplish remains to this day the best evidence that their affirmation was true. When St Paul has to argue the case for the Resurrection, he adduces a list of appearances of the Risen Christ culminating in his own. 'Last of all, as unto one born out of due time, He appeared to me also.' His conversion was not effected by anything that had happened at Jerusalem, but, as all the world knows, by the appearance of the Risen Christ on the road to Damascus.

¶ When a Swiss missionary secretary asked Sundar Singh whether his conversion was caused by an objective appearance of Christ or a subjective vision, he answered him quite decidedly: 'No vision, no vision; appearance! appearance!'[1]

2. There is surely great necessity at the present time to remember the kind of faith in the resurrection of Christ which is vital to Christianity. It has two sure effects, which may serve as sufficient tests of its existence in any one of us. First of all, it induces a public profession of belief. 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.' A genuine conviction that Jesus, who died on the Cross, and was buried in the Garden, did not perish in the grave, but survived death, not in some pale ghostly state, but in the plenitude of personal life, compels an attitude towards the teaching and example of Jesus which can only be satisfied by the acknowledgment of His Lordship. You cannot separate the life before and the life after the death on Calvary. As the first was unique in its moral quality, so it formed a direct challenge to the human conscience and to the human reason. As it was inseparably bound up with spiritual claims of the most exalted kind, so the approval which in conscience and in reason men perforce yielded to the doctrine and character of Jesus raised a religious question of the utmost gravity. Something is wanted to justify this union of the highest manhood the human race has, in its long experience, known, and spiritual claims altogether beyond the world's experience of good men. Something is wanted which shall transform wonder into worship, perplexity into faith. There is yet a third element of uniqueness to be taken into account when we seriously consider the problem of Jesus. To the unique moral excellence of the manhood disclosed in the Gospels, and to the unique spiritual claims which no rationalizing criticism can remove from the teaching of Christ there is added an absolutely unique historic fact, the persistence of Christ's personal life after death. This is not a fact which can be dwarfed and shrivelled into a prodigy, for which a case must at all hazards be made out by apologetic skill, and carried into men's acceptance by rhetorical appeals to sentiment and emotion. Personal life authenticates itself by infallible proofs: from it radiates the characteristic virtue of personality, moral influence inducing moral likeness. Personal life is a power which enkindles men's affections, puts a coercion on their wills, moves them to action.

This is precisely the kind of power which came upon the Apostles from the moment

[1] Friedrich Heiler, *The Gospel of Sâdhu Sundar Singh*, 49.

when they saw their Master, living, glorious, and energetic, after His death. The Christophanies ceased, but the Personal Influence which they inaugurated and explained has continued until this hour. Without the Christophanies it is hard to imagine how the Apostles could ever have been lifted out of the despair in which they had been plunged by the sombre and appalling events of Passiontide: without that clear, unfaltering witness of the men who had traversed with the Lord the Valley of the Shadow of Death and felt the bitterness of the ineffable disaster on Calvary—the witness that, indeed, they had seen the Master, had recognized Him, been consciously in contact with Him, felt once more the thrill of His personal presence, received again and in richer measure than ever before the inspiration of His Spirit—it is hard to see how men in later times could ever have dared to interpret aright their own spiritual experiences or have found courage to trust their own noblest intuitions.

The Apostle fastens on the true, abiding, and unshaken testimony of history. The Death, the Burial, the Resurrection, certified by the Christophanies, and the evangelistic activities of the Christian Church—these remain, and these suffice. There is a certain suggestiveness in the fact that of the sites in Jerusalem associated with the Lord's resurrection that of the tomb in the Garden appears to be hopelessly doubtful, while that of the upper room in which the Holy Communion was instituted, and into which, through doors fast-locked for fear of the Jews, the Risen Saviour is said to have come with words of peace and commission, is identified with comparative certainty. 'I believe,' writes Dr Sanday, 'that of all the most sacred sites it is the one that has the strongest evidence in its favour. Indeed, the evidence for it appears to me so strong that, for my own part, I think that I should be prepared to give it an unqualified adhesion.'

The tomb in the Garden has only an archæological interest for those who can worship the Lord present in their midst. Whether or not St Paul knew of the message about the open grave is a doubtful question, but there is no doubt at all as to the little importance which he attached to it. 'Certain it is,' says Harnack truly, 'that what he and the disciples regarded as all-important was not the state in which the grave was found, but Christ's appearances.'

¶ 'We have a proof in our religion that you haven't in yours,' interrupted a Moslem one day while the Christian preacher was speaking, 'for when we go to Arabia we can find the tomb of the Prophet, so that we have proof that he lived. But when you go to Jerusalem you cannot be sure you have the burial place of Jesus. You have no tomb as we have.'

'True,' replied the preacher, 'we have no tomb in our religion because we have no corpse.'[1]

The vital truth is not something about which scholars may argue, and which critics might conceivably be competent to disprove. Do you believe in your heart that Jesus lives? Does your belief compel you publicly to confess Him as Lord? 'No man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit.' You cannot really believe that Jesus rose from the dead and not confess your belief: and that must mean your public association with the Christian society, which perpetuates the Apostolic witness to the fact of the Resurrection. The Holy Communion is the proclaiming of this fact in the most solemn, authoritative, and persuasive manner possible. 'As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come.' Yes; but to exult in the Lord's death is to express your conviction of His life, which has stripped that death of its gloom and terror, and clothed it with blessed significance.

> What, and could His friends maintain
> Feastful memory of His pain?
> Could they thus with joy recall,
> Face to face, their Leader's fall?
> Never—had not He who died
> Cast the cords of death aside,
> Shedding on the Cross the ray
> Of His Resurrection-day
> When He left the garden grave
> Deathless, ageless, strong to save.
> Sure as now His Bread I eat,
> Sure as lip and chalice meet,
> Every sceptic fear is vain:
> Jesus died—and rose again.

3. This conviction thus inevitably confessed with the mouth is no barren creed, but a spiritual force within us making always for righteousness. 'Howbeit,' writes the Apostle in days like our own of religious controversy and confusion, 'the firm foundation of God

[1] E. Stanley Jones, *The Christ of Every Road*, 89.

standeth, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his': and, 'Let everyone that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness.' Just because the Resurrection demonstrates the lordship of Christ, and authenticates His claim to be the Bread from Heaven, by which we may live immortally, so is it inseparably connected with His summons to live righteously. The two conditions of morality are secured to us by the Resurrection of our Lord: grace to enable effort, and hope to inspire it.

The victory of Christ is seen to carry consequences of the utmost importance. He is bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh in the indivisible unity of the human race: He becomes for us all the pledge of final triumph. In Him we are sharers of that conquering manhood which overcame the very principle of mortality. By Him we are made strong to overcome sin, and assured of immortal life.

Believing with the Heart

Rom. x. 10.—'With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.'

1. That is just what the critics say about us. They say that we Christians have allowed our hearts to run away with our heads—that we are fond of enjoying our emotions and our affections, but are lazy about exact thinking. So they go on to declare that our religion is little better than a sentiment, and that in it we are not seekers for truth but seekers after feeling. Some of them would even add: 'It is all very well for you to have these emotions and affections—to have a deep love for Christ—but when you go on to base practical conduct on your emotions, and even to call on others to do the same, we must protest and decline. Christ may be a very lovable person, and a most attractive character, and yet He may be a most unreliable guide in practical life.

None the less, and in spite of all that, we believe that St Paul meant what he said; that he regarded the decisions of the heart about Christ as far more important than the decisions of the head. He knew that the kind of belief that really saves is belief of the heart; that what really matters about a man or a woman is what he or she loves; that in the conflict between head and heart, the heart will always have the last word. And we believe he thought of Christianity as a supreme appeal by God to man addressed fundamentally to the heart, to the affections, to our capacity to love with some real devotion. We believe he considered that Christ's credentials, or the guarantee of His authentic Divinity, consisted not in His miracles or the manner of His birth or anything of that sort, but in His power to command the heart and draw out the affections of real people.

We have not so treated Him. We have tried to understand Christ with the mind. We have tried to commend Him to men by arguments—sometimes long and complicated arguments. We have even tried to compel belief in Him by sheer reason. And one very much doubts whether it has all achieved much.

¶ 'How limited is the force of human reason!' exclaims Lord Beaconsfield, in *Conings by*. 'We are not indebted to the *reason* of man for any of the great achievements which are the landmarks of human progress. It was not *reason* that besieged Troy: it was not *reason* that sent forth the Saracen from the desert to conquer the world: it was not *reason* that inspired the Crusades and instituted the Monastic orders: it was not *reason* that created the French Revolution. Man is only truly great when he acts from the passions, never irresistible but when he appeals to the imagination.'

¶ When Mozart fell in love with Constance Weber and proposed marriage, her guardian insisted that he should sign a document binding him to marry Constance within three years, or if he changed his mind to pay her a yearly sum of 300 florins. Constance tore up the paper, and, falling on Mozart's neck, said, 'Dear! I need not any written assurance from you. I believe your word.' More people are loved into religion than are argued into it.[1]

2. Men have applied history and philosophy and criticism, and even science, to the intellectual problem of Christ. Within their own chosen spheres they have done first-class work and work of inestimable value. But it is not along that line of appeal that the mass of men are going to be convinced about Jesus of Nazareth. For the mass of men will neither read those books nor follow the argumentation in them. They are not going to accept Chris-

[1] F. C. Spurr, *A Preacher's Note Book*, 76.

tianity in the form of an elaborate theory of the universe, for the simple reason that they don't want and are not looking for a theory of the universe. But they *are* looking for a leader whom they can trust and love. The mass of mankind are susceptible to the appeal of persons. Only a small proportion of them are susceptible to the appeal of mere ideas or capable of responding to them with devotion. The real hope of our religion lies in the fact that it was embodied in a Man who can be loved.

And loving Jesus does save people. It does change them. It does re-make them. It is possible to believe in Jesus with our mind, or at least to think we do, and yet not to live under His influence. Many people who would assent to theological doctrines about the Divinity of Jesus yet forget Him for most of the time. But nobody forgets those whom he really loves. Our real loves dominate and determine us. As soon as love of that Man of Nazareth possesses anybody, that person begins to become like Him. By far the best and truest description of the way in which salvation happens is that once we have come to love Christ that love drives out of our lives everything inconsistent with it, and we are changed into His image.

3. But the question will be asked, What if loving Jesus, and trying to live as He did, means being at cross purposes with the nature of things? What if it means being led away by something lovely but irreconcilable with the hard facts of a hard world?

That is what many people think even though they may not say it. They think that love is a very suitable thing for the home and between friends, but utterly unsuitable for the worlds of business and politics. They think that it is a good thing to worship Christ on Sundays in churches and during private hours, but that really He is not a Master to follow out there where the affairs of the world have to be carried on as best we may. Are we not sometimes tormented by that question ourselves? Do we not sometimes leave church on Sunday with a new glow of devotion to Christ in our heart, and then on Monday, at our place of business, find ourselves tempted to believe that we must desert Christ in order to get on at all there?

Let us look at one feature of the whole present situation. Long ago men in industry and commerce slipped into the competitive method of doing business. They did not want to work in brotherhood, and preferred competition. It was not the Christian way, but for long it seemed to work without disaster. But it has developed of late into its inevitable form. Small competitions have become great ones. Instead of the old friendly firms, there are now great impersonal trusts with millions of money behind them, and in their rivalries they involve whole nations, with their Governments. Rivalry has become a case of nation against nation, and the armaments of the world have been called into existence as the means of carrying on that rivalry. It has come to pass that the discovery of a new source of wealth anywhere in the form of gold, or oil, becomes at once not a blessing but an international danger; and in these days, when the potential wealth of the world outruns human needs, human beings are none the less in poverty because the system of rivalry has become interlocked, and so paralysed. The unchristian way, in short, is being proved to be a way that will not work. It involved always an outrage on some of the finest elements in our natures, and in particular it called on men to do violence to their hearts.

And now there it is—that gigantic system in whose meshes we are all involved and about which, one by one, we feel that we can do almost nothing. It torments us, and we may hate it, but it seems all-powerful. It has brought millions to the starvation point; it compels more millions to work on terms and with methods that violate their best natures.

¶ Stanley Jones tells of a missionary in India who said to him in the course of conversation, 'What we need is another famine to get rid of surplus stocks. That will raise the prices and will bring back prosperity.' 'I felt,' he writes, 'as though I had been struck, for the statement was serious and thoughtful. Here was a man of most gentle, loving disposition talking about the necessity—mark the word—of another famine. Look at that word "famine" until it is no longer a word, but a fact—the fact of living skeletons, of babies, thin and scrawny, sucking in vain at the dry breasts of famished mothers—but you can't look any longer, for you're sick at the thought. And yet a missionary, a Christian, a father of little children said we needed that—that! It horrifies you? Yes. But the thing that horrifies me most is, not

that he said it, but that what he said was true —*under this order.*'

But we believe that it is coming to an end! It is being destroyed, not as we might have wished by a united revolt by people with consciences; it is being destroyed by its own inherent wrongness. It will not work, and that fundamentally because it is at variance with the truth about God. It is an unloving system, therefore God, or the very nature of things, is against it.

The nations of Europe may yet, for a while, go on refusing to forgive one another, and declaring that a policy of forgiveness is sheer sentimental nonsense unsuitable for the real world. But if they do, then sheer financial ruin is going to fall upon us, and we shall be destroyed by our folly and our greed. And yet already the hearts of men and women are protesting against these things. Millions of hearts are tormented by them, only people are afraid to follow their hearts. They allow themselves to be talked and argued into doubts. They are told the heart is a dangerous guide, and that we must trust our heads, though our heads have led us to the brink of the pit.

Well, it all depends upon whether God is love. If He is, then the heart cannot be a dangerous guide, because it is the power by which we men and women are united to God. If God is love, and Christ reveals that love, then the way of life must be to believe in Christ *with the heart,* and forthwith to follow Him even though mere reason may not be able to see beforehand the results of our following.

¶ Mr Lowes Dickinson makes his imaginary Chinese official write of the social teachings of Jesus: 'Enunciated centuries ago, by a mild Oriental enthusiast, unlettered, untravelled, inexperienced, they are remarkable not more for their tender and touching appeal to brotherly love, than for their aversion or indifference to all other elements of human excellence. The subject of Augustus and Tiberius lived and died unaware of the history and destinies of imperial Rome; the contemporary of Virgil and of Livy could not read the language in which they wrote. Provincial by birth, mechanic by trade, by temperament a poet and a mystic, he enjoyed in the course of his brief life few opportunities, and he evinced little inclination, to become acquainted with the rudiments of the science whose end is the prosperity of the state. The production and distribution of wealth, the disposition of power, the laws that regulate labour, property, trade, these were matters as remote from his interests, as they were beyond his comprehension. Never was man better equipped to inspire a religious sect; never one worse to found and direct a commonwealth.' The all-sufficient answer to the charge of the inadequacy of Jesus as a guide to social welfare is the fact, that only in so far as we are able to express His mind in our social relations do they satisfy us.[1]

The Christian way to which our hearts call us is the way of statesmanship, the way of economic recovery, the way of salvation in international affairs, the way of life in commerce and industry. And surely before long there must arise statesmen who will dare to lead us in those ways! Surely the cynics cannot much longer be suffered to lead us ever nearer and nearer to the final collapse! But statesmen can do nothing until they have behind them great masses of convinced people. That is where we are called to come in. We have to swell the ranks of those who are waiting for a Christian lead.

Are we ready for the new day? Are we ready to suffer in the name of Christ in order that, through suffering, we may find the way to life? Are we prepared to follow wherever love leads, and trust the future—our future and the world's future—to God who is love?

Christ and Creed

Rom. x. 10.—'With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.'

It is most important that we should believe rightly. One may say, 'it does not matter in the least what a man believes, provided he lives straight.' That is a reply which is often given; and its insufficiency lies in this, that it implies that belief and the springs of good conduct reside in separate water-tight compartments in a man's nature. Which is not the case. Character expresses itself in belief; and belief has clear effects upon action and, therefore, finally upon character.

If a man have the 'Christ spirit,' it seems to

[1] H. S. Coffin, *Some Christian Convictions*, 176.

many people to matter very little whether he hold the Christian doctrines or not. And yet it is historically, psychologically and experimentally certain that the 'Christ spirit' cannot be divorced from the '*mind* of Christ.' Emotion cannot be healthily maintained apart from thought. Sentiment is liable suddenly to disappear, or to swing round into an utterly contradictory passion, unless it be linked with some permanent reasons. And the same is true of good conduct. Stability of character is more likely where there is stability of principle. Ethical orthodoxy cannot subsist on mere sentiment. The allurements of the flesh and the devil, and the arguments which can be sophistically brought up to justify them, are so strong and subtle, that without a real intellectual support unselfishness is impossible for long. In short, neither the Christian sentiment nor Christian conduct can be nurtured, let alone created, without Christian belief.

When people say they want 'Christianity without dogma,' what do they mean? They cannot mean that there is no such thing as truth. What they must mean is that they will not be forced without conclusive evidence to say that they believe in everything which some particular set or sect of men say they believe in. Churches may make their own conditions of membership. They are not the gate-keepers of the heavenly world. One man can see farther than another, and farther at one period of his life than at another period. One nation, one age, is more subtle and profound than another, and all who live in that age and atmosphere are infected with its spirit. Ages, like individuals, can only see for themselves. To make a man say that he sees what he does not see is not to make him see it, it is to make him tell lies. To punish a man for not seeing something which he cannot see is, to use the quaint expression of Hood, to give a man 'two black eyes for being blind.' On the other hand, we are not to repudiate authority, for authority is the basis of most of our knowledge. Vast fields of knowledge are open to us only on the authority of others. We accept the conclusions of the great masters of science, not because we have verified their conclusions or are experts in their methods. We cannot investigate everything for ourselves. We must accept the conclusions of others. In ten thousand matters of practical life we must act on the authority of others. Such assent to authority is rational assent. We assent because we are assured by our reason that such an one knows more about a thing than we do; because we believe that he is master of the subject, which we, it may be, have neither time nor ability to investigate.[1]

¶ The story runs—and has become proverbial in controversy—that the charcoal burner, pressed with questions as to his religion, took refuge in the declaration, 'I believe what the Church believes.' If that saying be offered as a reason for intellectual indolence, as if any of us could rightly live without exerting our mental powers in the supreme matter of religion, it may be abused very dangerously. But if it is meant that none of us is really dependent on the slender understanding of truth which we personally possess, and it is our right and our strength to build on the larger basis of common Christian belief, and to supplement our weakness and our ignorance by the power and knowledge of the Church, then it indicates a truth both necessary and consoling. A knowledge of arithmetic will serve in the ordinary purposes of business, but what would you think of a man who with that modicum of knowledge denounced and ridiculed higher mathematics? We are constantly taking for granted in ordinary life the soundness of the conclusions slowly worked out in the laboratories of chemists and in the studies of scholars. It is not otherwise in religion. Behind the assumptions of the Christian life lie the labours of generations of thinkers and students. A whole theology is needed to justify in reason the simple prayer of a child.[2]

So the human soul must have a creed. The soul must recognize the act by which it gives itself over to the possession of another. If it is to offer itself, personally alive, to the will and love of One who personally calls it, it can do this only by a conscious intelligent act gathering up the purpose of the entire self into an uttered expression of its desire. If it is to be saved, it must be able to say 'I believe.'

'I believe in—what?' What is the meaning and intention of this word in which Faith makes its self-surrender? What was it that God then did for me? I must know enough of what it was, to give real force to the motive with

[1] W. Page Roberts, *Our Prayer Book*, 183.
[2] H. H. Henson.

which I trust His love to-day. And this I can know only through the experience of those who fell under its immediate and unqualified impact. Experience! Something happened: and men were there who saw and felt it. They experienced its invasion. They alone, who were eye-witnesses, can say what it was that they saw. An experience is a fact as felt. Something from without passed within their assimilative apprehension; it affected them in a certain manner; it produced in them a reaction: and that inward reaction is part of the truth of what we call the fact. We cannot state what the fact was without including its significance to them. Their experience of it, whatever it was, is essential to it. We are required, then, to give meaning to our eternal relationship to the pardon and love of God by filling it out with the experience which certain men had of its crucial activity on our behalf some two thousand years ago.

Now this apostolic experience is conveyed to us through the medium of the Written Book. And, in order to sum up the very core of this unique experience, we have a Creed handed down to us. This Creed simply rehearses the fact as the men who experienced it understood it. It states the thing that they believed to have happened. That is all. And all the after-work of Creeds is devoted to this one object. The Creeds expand a little, and take in some new phrases. But these have no value except that of preserving and transmitting the one supreme experience.

The theological interpretation of the ultimate fact will vary from generation to generation, as each brings in, to help its interpretation, all the resources of its special experiences and peculiar modes of thought. But through all their variety of expression and application, their standard of value lies solely in their power to interpret the one work done once for all, the one experience through which God's Eternal Significance made itself manifest in a unique act of our salvation.[1]

1. *The Origin of Creeds.*—At first the Church formulated no creed, because none was necessary. Thus, if we examine the passages in the New Testament which describe the admission of a new convert into the Church, we find that it is the simple confession of Christ's lordship which he makes. The Philippian jailer asks in his terror, 'What must I do to be saved?' and receives the answer, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.'

Such was the earliest Christian creed. There was no necessity to commit it to writing. It was so simple that it ran no risk of being either forgotten or misunderstood. An instant's reflection, however, shows us that this happy situation must of necessity be as short-lived as the hours of the morning or the years of childhood. Very soon doubts and misunderstandings would arise. The mere lapse of time would bring unthought-of problems, and there would be none of the fathers left, whose decision would put an end to controversy.

So formal creeds or summaries of belief, which could be used for the instruction of new converts, or appealed to in disputes with strange teachers, came into being. Paul seems already to be alluding to such a summary when he says in his Epistle to the Romans that, whereas these Roman Christians had once been servants of sin, they had now become obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto they were delivered. The form of teaching seems to mean some simple summary of Christian belief such as has been described. Such were the first beginnings of our present Creeds. As the centuries passed, the primitive statements of faith were found insufficient, and creeds became more lengthy and elaborate. Christian belief became a matter of keen intellectual interest. Conflicting doctrines were confidently put forward as the Church's creed. So to put an end to uncertainty, and silence controversy, the simple primitive creed was amplified and expanded. It was thought that the truth could not be too carefully or emphatically stated. Hence the great Creeds of Western Christendom, the 'Apostles,' the 'Nicene,' and the 'Athanasian.'[1]

2. *The Insufficiency of Creeds.*—The effort to express the idea of God in the form of a compact system of teaching, valid for all men and for all time, is, in the nature of the case, vain. Peter had his 'creed' in this sense, inherited from his Jewish forbears, and under its influence he was prepared to set limits to the operation of the grace of God in Christ; he comes into contact with Cornelius, and lo! his creed is not big enough, and in astonishment he exclaims, 'Of

[1] H. S. Holland, *Fibres of Faith*, 93.

[1] J. Gamble, *Christian Faith and Worship*, 151.

a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is acceptable to him.' The ideas transmitted from the past were too narrow to compass the saving goodness of God. So in later ages.

Religion is the response of the whole man to God—the response of conscience and will, of thought and affection. But a creed is merely the expression of thought about God—the utterance of the intellect. To lay the stress on the creed is therefore to affirm that in religion the mind is of the first, if not of exclusive, importance. And this is false to the method of Jesus Christ. 'By this,' said He, 'shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.' At every stage of His ministry He emphasized not what men said about Him or about God, but the practical attitude they took up. The affirmation of the mere intellect is nothing if it stand alone; the confession which the life as a whole makes is everything. 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him.' Not doctrinal accuracy, but living obedience, is the supreme condition of this hallowed fellowship.

The creeds, let us remember, belong to the realm of theology, and theology is a science. It is the science through which men interpret the manifold revelation of God in Nature, in history, in Scripture, in the Church, in personal experience. And every science, however valuable, falls short of compassing the whole range and variety of the object with which it deals. Life, expanding, multiplying, expressing itself in countless forms, and continually increasing their number, is far larger and more interesting than biology, which is the science of life. The heavens are vastly more wonderful than the report of them which the most amply equipped modern astronomer is able to give. The beauty of tree and hedgerow, plant and flower, has a charm all its own; and he who responds to its charm knows something surpassing all the classifications with which botany has to do. In regard to God, we may be thankful for whatsoever great thinkers have done to assist the thoughts of their fellows; we may reverently study the creeds in which the common thought of large sections of the Church of God has been set forth; but a living faith in a living God carries us far beyond: 'Behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house' of dogma, this temple of creed that men have builded! God is larger than our intellectual conceptions of Him. Love is greater than a formal treatise respecting love; light more glorious than the laws of light, though set forth by a Newton or a Tyndall; and the God who is Love and Light sheds forth His brightness and His grace far beyond the limits which theologians have been able to describe.

¶ 'After the death of that dull person, Mr Wortley,' writes Dr Gossip, 'all his wife's love letters were found, each endorsed on the outside with the date and a synopsis of the contents! What these intolerable synopses are to all the wealth of love within, surely the doctrines are to the real gospel. For religion is a falling in love; and as Jalalu 'D Din Rumi puts it, "However much we describe and explain love, when we fall in love we are ashamed of our words. Explanation by the tongue makes most things clear: but love unexplained is clearer."'

¶ 'In theology,' said Jowett of Balliol, 'the less we define the better. A true instinct prevents our entangling the faith of Christ with the philosophy of the day, the philosophy of past ages is a still more imperfect exponent of it.' And A. B. Davidson, 'Our reasoned thoughts of God are mostly sure to be false: a few great reverential thoughts or rather feelings about Him is our truest knowledge—let every thought be a feeling.'

3. *Creeds and Practical Religion.*—(1) The Christian religion is a personal relationship; it is not a form of words and it is not an ecclesiastical system; it is, in the first instance at any rate, a personal relationship towards Jesus Christ. That is one of the points that in these days need to be very strongly insisted upon. In the things of the soul we have to stand, as it were, one by one. No other man, no church, and no body of men, can ever be responsible for our attitude to God or for our relationship to God in Christ Jesus. But it is a great encouragement to our souls to realize that hosts of other people of all ages have seen in Christ what we ourselves have seen. That is the power of creeds to express the common faith and make the common confession.

(2) There must be the open acknowledgment of our faith. 'Confess with the mouth.' We have to put our faith into words and give it articulate meaning. The disciple of Christ must not only own Christ as his Lord and Master; he must let his allegiance be seen. There could be no question of his keeping his faith a secret.

¶ When a member of Parliament was in Australia, he saw the Union Jack flying on a lonely road with only a couple of houses in it. He asked if the flag was flying because of his visit, and he was told that it was not. 'No one knows,' said an Australian, 'that you are here. The flag is flying to let people see to which nation we belong.' 'But,' said the visitor, 'no one passes.' 'Never mind that,' came the reply; 'we go out and look at it ourselves.' [1]

Many of us admit to our shame that we do not in any real way confess the Lord Jesus with our mouth. We do not let it appear that we are among His disciples. We gather but seldom at the table which bears witness to His love and His hope. We support the Church perhaps as a political institution—treating it as if it were a pawn in the game of politics—but we do not avail ourselves of its ministries. We are hindered perhaps by indolence, perhaps by false shame. But what an odious thing false shame is in all its forms! Bad as it may be to be ashamed of one's parentage or one's early companions, it is still worse to be ashamed of one's faith, the faith which has been the stay of the innumerable company of just men who watch us from the world unseen.

¶ R. L. Stevenson, in his *Travels with a Donkey*, tells of a walk in the Cevennes. 'I met but one human being that forenoon, a dark military-looking wayfarer, who carried a game-bag on a baldric; but he made a remark that seems worthy of record. For when I asked him if he were Protestant or Catholic—

'Oh, said he, 'I make no shame of my religion. I am a Catholic.'

(3) Creed issues in conduct. A definite way of believing ends in a definite way of living. The Christian metaphysic results in the Christian ethic. Orthodoxy, which is right thinking, is not without orthopraxy, which is right living. 'Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.'

¶ It is said that a missionary in India, after a visit paid to a prison there, expressed his pleasure at the way in which the Christians 'stood right up in the jail before the non-Christians and boldly repeated the Creed.' It did not seem to occur to him that the Creed should have kept them out of jail.

¶ I once had another religion, mincing, lisping, bated breath, proper, hunting the Bible for hidden truths, but no obedience, no sacrifice. Then came the change. The real thing came before me. Soft speech became crude salt. Words became deeds. The commands of Christ became not merely Sunday recitations, but battle calls to be obeyed, unless one would lose one's self-respect and manhood. Assent to creed was born again into decisive action of obedience. Orthodoxy became reality. Instead of saying 'Lord, Lord,' in a most reverent voice many times and yet continuing deaf to the simplest commandments, I began to look upon God as really my Father and to rely upon Him as a real Father and to trust Him as such. In other words I dropped cant and ceremony and became a Christian. Reverence, I observe in the New Testament, is not apparent politeness and manifest disobedience, but filial or childlike obedience, trust, and love.[1]

Jesus Christ did lay down a law, He did set before men an ideal, He did aim at character, and He did show us certain requirements in the way of conduct. It is one of the things one very often hears said at present that one must not preach an ethical gospel. But what is the gospel if it is not ethical? Not of course solely and ultimately ethical and nothing else, but it has grave ethical implicates. Obedience to the law of Christ is an absolutely necessary element in the relation of the soul to Jesus Christ. There can be no real faith in Christ and no real love to Christ unless we do the things that He says.

The very acceptance of the Divinity of Jesus Christ lies in this simple personal relationship of trust, obedience, and love. It is not a question ultimately of three Persons in one or of two natures in one Person; it is not an intellectual problem at all. It is a problem of the soul and of faith. Who is ultimately the man who believes in the Divinity of Jesus

[1] *The Christian Herald.*

[1] Norman P. Grubb, *C. T. Studd*, 124.

Christ? Is it the man who says he does? Is it the man who says he is prepared to accept everything the Church has said on the subject? Or is it the man who, in the secret place of his own soul, in that temple where none enters but himself and God, is able to say, 'My Lord and my God,' and who carries out his confession in loving obedience every day of his life?

We often hear that in business and in matters of everyday concern people are always anxious to deal with the head of the firm, with the man who can really say the thing with authority; they do not like to be put off by clerks, secretaries, and the rest of it. Surely it would be a wise thing if people would do that in religion. After all, ministers, churches, books, creeds, doctrines, sacraments, are all in the position of the intermediary, of the clerk, so to speak. You want to get behind every one of them to the Master who alone is able to meet your need and who alone is able to speak to you the Word.[1]

No Disappointment

Rom. x. 11, 12.—'No one who believes in him, the scripture says, will ever be disappointed. No one.' (Moffatt.)

This is a bold promise, face to face with this great ailing world of needy hearts and hungry spirits. No one who believes in Christ will ever be disappointed. Let a man, any man, give himself to Christ, and really let that Christ have His way with him, and, to a certainty, his most daring hopes will justify themselves, and his most splendid dreams grow facts.

Perhaps that does not strike us as much as it should, because any real hopes we have in Christ are apt to be trivial and petty, amounting to little more than a blurred feeling, largely undetailed, that, of course, we are the better for Him, though just how and in what ways we don't pause to specify. Meantime, we potter on from day to day with nothing very notable to show for it as yet, with the old faults stubbornly surviving, and the familiar failings showing through, staring and obvious as ever. And that apparently contents us, does not strike us as something vastly less effective than what we were plainly promised. A faith so unambitious is not difficult to satisfy.

[1] W. B. Selbie.

But in the New Testament it is quite otherwise. Nothing in human thought even approaches the daring of the claims that these men make for Jesus Christ, and for what He can do for any one. Listen to the audacious prayers they boldly offer on behalf of humdrum and quite commonplace folk, plainly expecting a full answer to them. For my part, so Paul tells them, I keep praying every day for every one of you, that, as you move about your lives, and put through your slave duties, you may so carry yourselves from hour to hour that even on His cross Christ's eyes may light up at the sight of you, and you may hear Him saying exultantly, 'It is worth while; and eagerly and gladly I would face and bear it all again to be the inspiration of such lives, the power that can produce natures so clean and generous and gracious. Yes, even Calvary itself is not too big a price for this.'

¶ 'Then said Jesus, our kind Lord,' to Juliana, 'It is a joy, a bliss, an endless satisfying to Me, that ever I suffered passion for thee.'

It is against the background of tremendous hopes like these that Paul calmly writes this confident assurance that there has never been, aye, and will never be, a case where Jesus has failed, where some one with any understanding of the point of the whole thing, trusted Him and received less than he expected. Surely such an assurance as that, from those who have made it their business in life to study this very thing, thrusts upon us a new fact with which we must deal.

¶ 'For myself, now, at the end of a long life,' wrote Newman, 'I say from a full heart that God has never failed me, has never disappointed me, has ever turned evil into good for me. When I was young I used to say (and I trust it was not presumptuous to say it) that our Lord ever answered my prayers.'[1]

1. There are those, young people it may be or busy folk, who, *although drawn to Christ, have not yet surrendered to Him.* They do feel the thrill of what He offers; they recognize the glory of His service. But they have an uneasy feeling that they are not the type of person for this kind of thing; or they can't credit that, in hard fact, it would really make much difference to them in their struggle

[1] Alexander Whyte, *Newman: An Appreciation*, 61.

against their too obstinate temptations. And so, though they look toward Him wistfully at times, they hang back hesitatingly. But does not this confident witness from all those with the right to speak come as the determining factor to push them over into definite action? Romanes tells us that he became a Christian, lured thereto not so much by faith, strictly so called, as just by common intellectual honesty, and that judicial mindedness, that candid willingness to face all alleged facts, which is the first working rule of every reputable man of science. As he explains, given enough evidence to build up a primary case, it is the business of a scientist, not to think, not to argue, far less to dismiss what may not fit into his own theories and preconceived ideas, but patiently and thoroughly to make personal trial of the thing by actual experiment. And here he found himself confronted by masses of people who declared that they had proved in their own actual experience that the Christian facts really are facts. From his particular angle that might appear most unlikely, and indeed it did. Yet here, also, he felt he had no right to an opinion one way or the other until such time as he had made honest experiment for himself. And when he did, he too found, not a little to his own surprise, yet beyond doubt, that the thing really works.

We challenge you, says Paul, to produce any situation with which Christ cannot fully cope. Do you say that you are desperately weak, with a poor, fickle, undependable will that keeps wavering suddenly just where your need is direst? Still, even for poltroons like that His grace has proved itself sufficient. That you are blundering and foolish? But this is One who is far wiser than our hearts, and heaps on us what we have not even the wit to ask for, or to know we need! That you have made a sorry mess of things and thrown away your battle, that battle which, says Dale, 'is lost or won before it seems to begin: the temptation in the wilderness determines, or largely determines, our fate, and every habit, good or evil, of those early years seems to have permanently affected my whole life?' Yet Christ's grace is not overawed and baffled by our weakness. Rather it is toward such beaten creatures, caught fast in the thickets of their own past foolishnesses, that it rises to its fullness. Let your need be what it may, there is ample in Christ for that—and for a whole world of souls as desperate as yours. For your case is not nearly so wonderful as you suppose. Don't you remember how Emerson, when shyly and diffidently he ventured to let slip some of the most secret facts of his own heart and life, found to his bewilderment that these things were not unique, as he had always imagined; but that when he described the lonely places where his footsteps had rung out so eerily, multitudes knew every feature of the road, broke in with little details that he had forgotten; for they also had been there?

So if you venture, you are not daringly faring forth into untraversed seas. You are taking a homely path worn broad and plain and bare by countless feet. Always when things grow dark and difficult the folk of the New Testament stand still a moment and listen; and always, as if by magic, the tire fades from their faces, and their hearts go singing on their way once more. And that because there, in the busy din and press of life, they have heard wafted back to them that shout of many voices, not a few of which their hearts remember and can recognize, giving praise because the grace in which they trusted has done all it promised. No one who believes in Christ will ever be disappointed.

2. This comes *as a challenge and rebuke to many Christian people*, leaving us hot-faced and ashamed. No one who believes in Christ will ever be disappointed. That obviously is the winning note; and it is ominous that we seem to have largely lost it, are disappointed, or at least give the impression that we are, in a way that is grossly disloyal to the Master, and that gravely misrepresents the facts. These Christians of the early days swept the world because they had, and knew they had, something that robbed life of its terrors, and that made them fit and able to face anything. These ordinary men and women had had their whole lives radically changed, and knew it. With it to draw upon they were ready boldly to measure themselves against the oldest and the strongest evils, and audaciously with their bare hands they tugged them crashing down. Were they told bluntly that this or that proposal of theirs was, on the face of it, impossible, they laughed, and said that there was no such word in their vocabulary.

To-day the Church's spirit seems pathetically different. There is no use bringing a railing accusation against the age. For what Emerson said of his is no less true of ours. People, he remarked, keep talking against the times, yet I, for my part, can see nothing wrong with them; they seem, like all times, very good times, if only we knew what to do with them! Yet this of ours has some disquieting features; and, not least among them this, that the Church seems to have lost heart somewhat, has allowed the old assurance and enthusiasm to cool below the temperature at which big things get done. We Church people have become so prone to loud and abusive self-depreciation that the thing amounts to a disease and does unreckonable damage; seeing that, upon the one hand, the steady drip drip of this cold, persistent rain of disheartening talk soaks pitilessly into people's shivering souls; and, on the other, that though these doleful spirits are not altogether serious, the world is listening, and takes us, not unnaturally, at our own dismal and unflattering valuation. With the result that people take their zeal and energy elsewhere into more hopeful quarters.

The fact is that in their own lives many of them seem to be a little disappointed. Their religion has not worked out as they had hoped. And, though they would not like to put it into blunt words, in their heart of hearts they feel, and they know that they feel, that somehow Christ has not really implemented in their case the expectations that He raised in them. Sometimes they lay their actual experience side by side with the glory of the promises as they lie there plain for all to see; and in comparison with all their sheen, the former looks drab and dull and unimpressive, shows little of the splendour of the original colours. And they feel more than a little daunted, or perhaps it is aggrieved, or else it may be shaken, and half afraid.

¶ Gibbon tells us that one day when in the full splendour of his powers Reynolds was shown some of his very early pictures, and that he declared that they made him feel abashed and humbled. 'I had thought,' he said, 'that after all these years of toil and effort I must have made much more advance than I have done.'

3. If the facts be really as we say, and it has been as resultless as all that, were it not well to consider the question *whether we have been fulfilling the required condition?* No one who believes in Christ will ever be disappointed. But then, as Coleridge warned us, it is one thing to believe, and quite another merely to believe that we believe. It is common enough to be drawn to Christ; and to feel that we would like to grow into His nature, and put on His ways. But that is not believing, is by far too indefinite a mood to allow Christ His opportunity. And we had better pull ourselves up sharply and consider where we are. All the great masters of all the religions keep laying stress on that. And surely it is common sense. 'Every evening,' says Al Ghazzali, 'I examine to see whether I have gained or lost in spiritual capital.'

And yet this art of spiritual stocktaking is a delicate one, which must be carried through with caution, or else we may so mishandle it that we may open the door to a whole flood of teasing, spiritual ailments, and grow nervous and jumpy and neurotic in our souls, trying ourselves perhaps by some unwise test, such as our own feelings, which can often be traced back to nothing higher than one's physical health, or even to the weather; or by our emotions, imagining complacently that all is well if we are touched and warm, and that everything is lost if these tides ebb a little for a while; or by our progress day by day, of which we are not always capable judges, having too limited a field of vision, like a private at the Front who was apt to forget that the run of things in his particular section need not determine accurately how the fortunes of the day were falling out for the line as a whole.

¶ 'Strength,' says Dale, 'is never in any true sense ours; we are but streams from the Eternal Fountain. It is the consciousness of the fullness of the fountain that gives us courage. But we are all, I suppose, inclined to wish to be lakes—or, at least, little pools—with waters of our own to be conceited about.'

If we are Christian folk at all self-examination brings to light very much more than what may disconcert and take aback, must surely force us into thanksgiving and praise. Our faith may be an insecure and brittle thing; but have we not proved that His faithfulness is as steadfast even as He promised? Our love to Him has tides that flow and ebb, leaving at times only bare ugly mud-flats in our

empty hearts; but His to us is always at the full.

We knew from the Gospels that He is a wonderful Master. But, having read them all with care, had we even begun to take it in that He is anything like as patient and forbearing and forgiving as He has proved Himself in our experience? We judged that the life He offers is by far better than any other. But had we realized until we tried how vastly better it is to be clean instead of soiled; and hale and healthy-minded, rather than diseased in soul; and free and one's own master, not wretchedly slinking in to heel at the first domineering call of some bullying sin? One who has known civilization may become at home among crude savages; and one brought up in all the myriad beauties of Nature's lavishness in some glorious land may grow content with the long dark and bitter cold of Arctic places. But one who has known Jesus Christ just could not live without Him.

The Message and the Messenger

Rom. x. 13, 14.—'For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?'

The Apostle has been speaking of the necessity of faith in Christ for justification and sanctification, and he has laboured to show that the invitation and the assurance of salvation extend to all nations and to men of all times. But the Jews are represented as objecting to the Apostle's contention on the ground that the plan of salvation was made dependent on faith, and a large part of the nation had had no opportunity of hearing the gospel. But Paul knows just where he stands, and where the Jews, his kinsmen according to the flesh, stand. He leaves no loophole of escape for those who follow his argument, and in the passage from which the text is taken reasons out his conclusions concerning the gospel to the Gentiles, leaving no inch of standing ground for the objector.

And in the course of his argument St Paul is led to lay down principles which apply to the gospel in all ages. The argument begins at the widest—the Lord, that is Christ, is rich unto all that call upon Him. But for the enjoyment of the riches there must be calling; and for the calling there must be believing; and for believing, hearing; and for hearing, preaching; and for preaching there must be sending—all links in a golden chain the staple of which is fixed in the throne of God's everlasting love and purpose. All these are steps in a ladder the foot of which stands amidst the welter of man's sin and ruin, its top lost in the glories of the Eternal City. There are many ways of accounting for man's condition and helping him out of it: this is the way of the Bible, the way of God in Christ.

1. *The World's Need of Salvation.*—This world is a lost world—lost to the service, enjoyment, and glory of Him who is at once its Creator, its Governor, and its End. Whenever you find a man, no matter what his environment or previous training, race, or creed, there you find a soul that needs God and His Christ. Man needs to be saved—saved in a large, broad sense. Salvation from sin? Yes, primarily, but men are to be saved from ignorance, from error, from false worship, from self-sufficiency, from despair, saved from everything that debases life. The world needs to be saved not merely from these things, but saved to holiness, happiness, heaven, to a knowledge of God, fellowship with God, likeness to God. The world needs salvation! And this salvation is in Christ alone.

¶ 'It is impossible,' says Seneca, 'for a man of himself to escape: it must be that some one stretch forth a hand and draw him out.'

'Whosoever shall *call* on the name of the Lord shall be saved.' That is the Biblical term for personal experimental religion, described under its most characteristic act and attitude. To rise above the illusion of sightlessness, to ignore the disconcerting report of the senses and the ominous silence of Nature; to assume *God*, to call on God as known, and of necessity near, known for grace and famed for love—that is religion. To act as overseen, to speak as overheard, to know that Spirit is for spirit, to pray, not as a beggar, but as mind to mind, kin to kin; and for the rest, for all the wrong that will never come right on earth, for the griefs that sear the heart, for the arrogance of death and the irony of the grave's response to human life and love, for all these things, trusting God's

wisdom, justice, and goodness—as a bird that casts itself off from the solid perch into the safer infinite home of air. Calling on the name of the Lord, that indeed is personal religion.

But what does a man want with God? What does he hope for from God? 'A healthy mind in a healthy body,' said the satirist, not venturing on a larger petition. But he that calls on the name of the Lord is bolder. The true subject-matter of prayer must be something great. 'Whosoever shall call . . . shall be *saved*.' That is an old-fashioned word, but it carries further than any new one we know. It is a window-word through which one looks out towards that great ultimate Good Thing which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart of man conceived, but towards which the affections and desires of the soul point. All the great words of the Bible look out towards this ultimate Good. Peace, Life, Light, Heaven, Salvation, are words culled from man's experience at its best, and his desire at its keenest, to serve as hints and images of the Good that transcends experience and the joy that outgoes desire. 'Whosoever shall call . . . shall be saved.'

2. *The Church is the Divinely Appointed Agency for Conveying this Salvation to the World.*—It is time we were waking up to a realization of what the Church of Christ really is. Until we know clearly what its function is we will be without power and prestige. The Church is God's agent in this world. Through it God does His work, and that work is to concern itself with everything that affects the life of humanity. There is no organization or institution, no avenue or agency half so broad visioned in its outlook on the needs and possibilities of men as the Church. It affords a common meeting-place for saints and sinners. Here all differences disappear, and man meets man on the broad basis that we are all alike in our need, and that all are equally free to God's full salvation. The ultimate aim and end of the Church is the salvation of men. The man in need at the gate of the Temple lies before the door of every church, and we fail of our Divine mission unless we persuade the hungry, weary, doubting souls around us that we have a joy and a blessing and a power which they do not possess, and that we are here to share it with them.

The Church works at the foundations of life. In strengthening the moral groundwork of society, in stimulating men to live up to the best that is in them, in sweetening and sanctifying all human relations, in ministering to the soul's salvation and spiritual refinement of the race, what can compare with a living Church?

¶ In a little book, *Religion and Politics*, by the Right Hon. Christopher Addison, M.D., M.P., there occurs this challenge and tribute to the Church. 'Have you ever thought how powerful the Church might be? When a politician tries to woo a constituency he does so by organizing all his resources of support, and however successful he may be, and however strenuous his labour, his machinery at the best is a feeble thing. But what is your organization? In every city in Europe and America there are places of worship, and in every town and village. There are missionaries, preachers, and adherents everywhere in every country in Europe and America. What are all the political associations of Conservatives, Liberals, Socialists, and all others put together beside yours? They are almost as nothing. They are as dust in the balance. If the Christian Church were to mobilize its powers no Government could stand against it. It has not awakened to its power. It has not decided its message. . . . If it would it could save the world.'

To the Church Jesus committed His grace and truth, with the command: 'Go, preach to every creature, go, teach all nations.' Carlyle spoke a great truth when he said that men will go to the Church that shows most concern for their salvation.

¶ The calling of the Church is to maintain a way of looking at this life of ours which a headlong world in one careless generation might trample in the dust. We are charged to keep up the glow and power of certain great and moving words, which, not without difficulty, hold a man to his destiny as moral and the child of God. It is with regard to such an institution—the society of those who believe in Jesus Christ and who live as seeing Him—that our blessed Lord has said so many great and amazing things. 'Ye are the salt of the earth,' He says. Ye are in yourselves the spiritual element, that moral rebuke, without which human life and human society would rot and go to pieces. 'Ye are the light of the world,' He says. Ye are that guidance, that

lamp in the darkness, without which the world is not living at all, for it is living to no purpose. 'Whatsoever ye bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven,' He says. That is to say, it is given under God by our ideals, by our protests, to recall the world from every way of wrong doing and wrong thinking, to keep alive and wakeful the moral sense of the world lest it die of neglect or of abuse.[1]

3. *The Preacher is the Chief Factor in this Work of the Church.*—How shall they hear without a preacher? Belief cometh by hearing. But it may be said, Why should men wait for a message in regard to fundamental questions affecting their own lives? Each soul is born afresh into this wonderful world; it is not without its own thoughts of God, and truth, and duty; it is an heir also of long and sacred traditions, and in the matter of what is called salvation it need not wait for any 'preacher' to come from no one knows where with an outside proclamation.

True, there is such a thing as 'natural theology,' perhaps a 'natural religion.' Paul has spoken of it more wisely than most philosophers. He tells us that the invisible is made known through the visible, even God's everlasting power and divinity; that, apart from the law, nations may be found doing the things of the law, and be a law unto themselves; and that God made of one all nations, to feel after Him and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us. Christianity at least has nothing to say against such 'natural religion' as this. Christ points in the Sermon on the Mount to the lessons of Nature and of conscience. John identifies the Word made flesh with the Light that lighteth every man coming into the world. All careful students of religion find tokens of its universality; and all the wisest find a measure of truth in ethnic religions. No Christian, St Paul least of all, is disposed to slight the evidences of God's presence in the hearts of all mankind, or to disparage reverent feeling and upright life wherever found.

But the wisest men, having said so much, are obliged to say more. The light shines, but in the midst of darkness; it shines all too feebly and fitfully, and the darkness comprehends it not, and for the most part is in danger of quenching it. Nature and conscience do, indeed, point out many things which men should not do, and punish them if they disobey these laws. But if men go wrong how are they to get right? Nature says: It is not in me, whose order is stern, rigid, inexorable. Conscience says, It is not in me; I told you plainly the path of duty; now that you have deserted it, take the inevitable consequences.

The highest religion of all was that of the Jew. Here we find a Divine revelation, though one imperfect and partial. And if we begin by pointing out the immense superiority of the Jews, to whom were committed the oracles of God, we must go on to point out the inability of the law to save, the insufficiency of the sacrifices to make the offerer perfect as pertaining to the conscience, the deep moral and spiritual deficiency which led to Pharisaism and Rabbinism. Surely the Jew of our Lord's day, of Paul's day, sorely needed to hear more than his justly prized law could teach him of the way of salvation; yet how could he hear without a preacher? Jew and Gentile, ancient Greek and modern Englishman, Hindu sage and South Sea savage, alike need a kind of help which can only come by direct proclamation, a message from the God whom the groping nations are feeling after but cannot find, not a result of reasoning, not an elaborated system, not a philosophy of life, not a code of ethics, but an authoritative announcement of the mind and will of God.

The gospel is adequate to the need of the whole world, but the one imperative, the one prerequisite, is the human instrument. The message is silent till the messenger arrives. The whole passion and purpose of God await the advent of the volunteer. It is a man that is wanted. It is men that are in demand.

¶ 'I dressed his wounds, God healed him' is the inscription over the gateway of the French College of Surgeons. It suggests the inevitable and indispensable union of two forces—God and man working together for the ends of redemption.

The Divine dependence on the human instrument is one of the lessons of history: 'God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets,' here is a great succession; 'hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son,' here is a great vindication. 'When God,' says

[1] J. A. Hutton, in *The British Weekly*, Oct. 3, 1929.

Jeremy Taylor, 'would save man, He did it *by way of a man*.'

'If God wants to save Africa,' said a lady to Alexander Mackay, 'can He not do it without your throwing your life away?' To the suggestion of a life thrown away history has given another and an abundant answer. Mackay knew two things: the first was that 'except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit'; and the second was that if he refused the call he might be limiting the Holy One of Israel, for God works, not through a vacuum, but through a man on the spot; a man is the vehicle and instrument of omnipotence.

We may say, honouring the sovereignty of God all the time, that there would have been no churches in Apostolic times in Galatia, in Corinth, in Philippi, in Thessalonica, in Ephesus, but for the consecrated labour of Paul. It rested with him whether many hundreds of people heard the gospel, or whether they remained in ignorance of its transcendent facts. And are we not driven to the conclusion that it rests with us, who compose the Church of Christ, whether certain people hear the name of Christ in their lifetime, or whether they never hear it? There can be no question of the pity of God for the vast procession of people who pass across this globe from the cradle to the grave in absolute ignorance of Christ, who have no notion of the pity and holiness of God as revealed in the ministry of healing and the death of sacrifice of our Lord and Master. It is not a question at this moment of what will come to such people in the after-life. It is rather a question of how completely their lives might be changed now by that knowledge which has made for the cleansing and transformation of every tribe and nation by which it has been received; and it is still further a question of how it will fare with us who have been too self-regarding and faithless to discharge our trust.

¶ The late Sir Frederick Treves, the Royal Surgeon, was once travelling in a train which was involved in a railway accident. The engine and tender went over the embankment, but the carriages mercifully remained in their place on the line. The driver and fireman were pinned beneath the wreckage, and it was a case of every able-bodied man to the rescue. Before long they succeeded in their task, and laid out by the side of the line two sorely battered and unconscious bodies, but with the breath of life still in them. And then they turned as one man to the great surgeon, with the appeal, 'Sir, can you do anything?' Sir Frederick Treves stood there, looking down on those two sorely battered men, and as he stood he wrung his hands in an agony of despair. 'Yes,' he said, 'I could save them—but I haven't got my instruments.'[1]

'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.' The master influence is always personal. And the personal influence of Christ is best mediated through His disciples. Nothing else is wanted; nothing less will do.

Down in the human heart, crushed by the tempter,
Feelings lie buried that grace can restore;
Touched by a loving hand, wakened by kindness,
Chords that were broken will vibrate once more.

The Responsibility of the Preacher

Rom. x. 14, 15.—'How shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?'

Truth needs an advocate. The evangel is latent till it finds the evangelist, the man with the gospel in his heart and in his experience, the man who can meet ignorance, doubt, and inquiry with the assured and tested word, 'We speak that we do know and testify that we have seen.' The living voice is the gospel's best advocate: 'When they heard this they were pricked to the heart.' . . . 'Many of them which heard the word believed.' Here, then, is a soul subduing thing: the gospel has power to penetrate earth's darkest fears and thickest gloom; it is able to still the storms of passion and hate, to purify the blemished life, to send its quenchless hope through death to the far fields of eternity, and it awaits the chosen instrumentality of living souls to give it to mankind.

Personality is the most powerful thing in the world. The gospel is the revelation of the personality of God in the personality of Jesus Christ. Personality was revealed and communicated through personality. There is no other adequate way. The gospel is from first

[1] D. P. Thomson.

to last a mighty concern of persons. Truth at its highest incarnates itself in personality; personality at its best is truth personified: 'I am the truth,' said Jesus. The gospel lives and conquers by means of human contacts. And the communication of the gospel is the best evidence that the man himself has it; if he does not pass it on, one is entitled to doubt his possession of it.

Heaven's gate is shut to him who comes alone;
Save thou a soul and it shall save thine own.

1. St Paul wants to emphasize the responsibility of the preacher. He has just said, 'How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?' At least, that is how the Authorized Version renders it. But the Revised Version has, 'How shall they believe in him whom they have not heard.' According to the Authorized Version the difficulty of belief is that they have not heard about Christ; but according to the Revised Version it is that they have not heard Christ. According to the Authorized the function of the preacher is to talk about Christ; but according to the Revised his function is to be a mouthpiece through whom Christ can speak about Himself. 'They are not likely to believe,' Paul says, 'unless they hear Christ.' If this was true when he wrote, it is abundantly true to-day. Many indeed to-day have heard *about* Christ; but there are multitudes who have never heard Christ. This ideal incomparably heightens the office of the ministry, and makes the work of the preacher very awful. No one has adequately conceived the function and office of the Christian preacher who regards the pulpit as the arena for an exhibition of his own originality or eccentricity of thought, instead of a position from which the mind and will of Christ may be declared to each generation, and where His very voice shall be recognized.

¶ Karl Barth begins one of his chapters in *The Word of God* with this devastating question. He is addressing exclusively, at the moment, ministers as *preachers*. 'Does it ever occur to you to ask' (thus he begins) 'why any person comes to hear you preach, or continues to come?'

Those who know Barth will be prepared to hear that he does not deal with this matter in a shallow way, or content himself with saying merely clever things at the expense of preachers. It is poor strategy to make your points and to alienate your hearers. What he simply and seriously urges upon all preachers is this: each ought to assume that those who in the House of God are looking towards him, the preacher, are there because they still believe that there is something to be said about life in the name of God, and that it may have been given to him, the preacher, to say it.[1]

How do men come at any name for God that stimulates great hopes? No name of grace is written across the sky. Nature is anonymous. To call on God for life immortal men must have heard some great good thing about God, something so great and good that the soul knew it for truth at sight, as the ear knows music the moment it hears, and the eye knows beauty in the act of seeing. We, the feeblest and poorest of us, say things of God and man such as no science dares, no philosophy dreams. Genius is eloquent, but her imaginings are sober beside what the preacher tells his congregation about the love of God, the sacrifice of Christ, and the door of hope in the valley of death.

Long fed on boundless hopes, O race of man,
How angrily thou spurn'st all simpler fare!

2. But how dare men preach except they be sent? If they were sent, if it be God's will that these great death-defeating things should be said, that faith and hope should be stimulated to the utmost, that alters the case. 'He that sent me,' was one of Christ's names for God, and our estimate of Jesus rises or falls as we accept or refuse the name. It adds the unit to what else is a mass of ciphers. Without it the Jesus of the great gospel sayings is absurd, but in its transfiguring light, how beautiful upon the mountains—Tabor, Olivet, Calvary!

Beautiful upon the mountains—in all ages and under all conditions—are the feet of him who bringeth glad tidings. Pheidippides, the swift courier, brought to Athens the joyful tidings of the victory of Marathon, and died with the single word of triumph upon his lips. In the depths of despair at the siege of Lucknow was heard the music, 'The Campbells are coming!' So with more sacred messages. 'O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get thee up into the high mountain; O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength! Lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!'

[1] *The British Weekly*, Dec. 13, 1934.

But a man who brings such a message must be sure that it is true. He must be instructed, authorized, despatched—how shall they preach, except they be sent? God must send. He alone has the authority, the power. He alone can make the proclamation necessary for the forgiveness of a single offender. He alone for a world. He alone can commission, teach, guide, equip messengers who are to carry such tidings as these.

So, when Jesus says, 'The harvest is plenteous, the labourers are few,' He does not bid men go, nor does He bid them call others; He bids them pray the Lord to send labourers into the harvest. So, when Paul describes the ministry of reconciliation, he says, God has committed it to us; we are ambassadors for Him; we beseech you in Christ's stead to be reconciled, and to accept the gracious proclamation which offers you the righteousness which is by faith.

It was so at the beginning. Christ chose twelve men. He did not write a treatise, or lay down the lines of elaborate organization, or draw up a code of laws or principles; He Himself lived, and taught, and worked, and—prepared men and sent them out. Partly in our Lord's lifetime, but much more after His death, apostleship was vital to the whole movement. The charter of missions begins with the words, Go ye, for I send you. So it was with Paul, who was called for a definite purpose, which he carried out with characteristic earnestness, fidelity, and success. His question, 'What wilt thou have me to do?' was answered by the one word, 'Go to the Gentiles, to whom now I send thee.' And his credentials at the beginning of every letter are, 'Paul, a bond-slave and messenger of the Lord Jesus Christ, an apostle, not of man, nor through man, but of Him who revealed His Son in me that I might preach Him among the Gentiles.'

'As the Father hath sent me'—His own Apostle, by His own appointed authority, 'so I send you'—My messengers, under My appointed authority to convey to the world the Good News. The preacher is not a diplomatist, given a free hand to negotiate and try to make the best terms he can with his proposals: he is just a messenger, knowing he is sent to direct mankind to the one assurance and authority for salvation—Thy God is King.

¶ There was a cartoon in a religious paper which represented a preacher giving an evangelistic address, with a lantern to illustrate it; and upon the sheet there was thrown from the lantern a view of Christ's Cross. But the speaker was in front gesticulating, and his shadow fell across the form of the Saviour. Underneath the cartoon was written: 'Stand down in front.'

¶ On the title-page of a volume of Father Stanton's sermons, published shortly after his death, were inscribed the words which expressed his own ideal and constant endeavour: 'This is what I should like to be said of me, when I am dead and gone the way of all flesh: "He preached Jesus."'[1]

3. Why this should be the one Divine method we need not stay to argue. It is natural for men to imagine that a universal salvation should be matter of universal revelation; to wonder why Jesus should be born so late in Bethlehem, and Christianity spread so gradually, so slowly; to question why the nations should so long be left in darkness, and so many remain still without the light. Enough for the moment that the Divine method of saving the world is by an appeal on the part of men to their fellows. Not by a sign from heaven, but by dwelling among men, and teaching and drawing them to Himself, did the Son of God do His work in the world. His followers must be like Him.

Great truths must be passed through great experiences if they are greatly to move men. It is not truth in the abstract that saves, but truth as assimilated and reproduced in mind and heart, in experience and life. Man's mind is made for truth, but truth must be presented in a prepared state. It may be obtained through books, but the normal method is through 'preaching,' by which we need not say is not meant mere pulpit deliverances. Books are fossilized human thoughts, and impart truth as the rays of the sun embodied in the coal furnish artificial light. But the match is needed to set the coal ablaze, and the experience, the sympathy, the living word from the living man are the chief powers which God the Holy Spirit uses for the work of bringing the gospel home to the hearts of men. As God's authority is needed to equip a messenger, so human instrumentality is needed to carry the message.

[1] J. W. W. Mooran.

The History of a Text

Rom. x. 15.—'How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!'

THESE words are quoted directly from a famous passage in Isaiah. As St Paul uses them they are made to refer directly to the missionary activities of the Christian Church. 'How lovely are the messengers that preach us the gospel of peace.' In this sense the well-known number in Mendelssohn's oratorio has made us all acquainted with the words. But the author of the later portion of Isaiah, from whom St Paul directly quotes them, was not the first to give them shape. If we compare the context in which they first occur with their setting in the Epistle to the Romans, we shall gain a marvellous insight into the process of Divine revelation and the gradual education of the human spirit which accompanies it.

1. Six hundred years before the coming of Christ occurred one of the great events of history. Nineveh fell. The world breathed once more when the mighty oppressor of nations was laid low. This imperial city was the great embodiment in antiquity of the immoral proposition that might is right. The insolence of the Rabshakeh, which we read in the eighteenth chapter of the Second Book of Kings, exactly expresses the proud and overbearing nation of which he was the spokesman. The Assyrian armies were the nightmare of the East. Barbarism and atrocity were political measures to Shalmaneser or Sennacherib, as much as to the furious Attila or the unspeakable Turk.

¶ The prophet's indictment against Nineveh has received strange confirmation from the inscriptions and sculptures which have been brought to light in recent years, many of which may be seen in the British Museum. 'The barbarities which followed the capture of a town would be almost incredible,' writes Professor Sayce, 'were they not a subject of boast in the inscriptions which record them. How deeply seated was their thirst for blood and vengeance on an enemy is exemplified in a bas-relief which represents Assur-banipal'—the king, be it remembered, who was Nahum's contemporary—'and his queen feasting in their garden while the head of a conquered Elamite king hangs from a tree above.'[1]

We can therefore understand something of the wild delight which passed like a great wave from one people to another as the news spread to the extremities of the Assyrian Empire that Nineveh had fallen. This almost frantic joy is the note of the prophet Nahum. In imagination he dances upon the slain. No word of pity for the big city, with its more than six score thousand persons that could not discern between their right hand and their left, and also much cattle, breaks the monotony of his taunt song. It is a living picture which his imagination has drawn, for all succeeding ages, of capture and sack and carnage. 'The Lord is a jealous God, and avengeth,' exclaims the triumphant seer. 'The Lord taketh vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and will by no means clear the guilty; the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.' Nahum sees the guardian hills that stand about Jerusalem, and the eager messenger bounding down the rugged bridle-path which leads to the Holy City. 'Behold,' he cries, 'upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace!'

When we read a passionate outbreak like the Book of Nahum, which, in appearance at least, closely resembles a hymn of hate, we wonder why it has found a place in the sacred Scriptures. For as Jeannie Deans has it in the *Heart of Midlothian*, 'They that thirst for the blood of their enemies have no taste for the well-spring of life.' But it does not stand alone. We join in the moving language of the partiotic exiles, who sit weeping by the waters of Babylon. 'If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.' So have lips, long since silent, expressed the deepest affections of our own hearts. But immediately we are shocked by the terrible climax, as the words addressed to Babylon falter and die upon our lips. 'Blessed shall he be that taketh thy children and throweth them against the stones.' We forget that in all ages men have attained to very different levels of ethical progress. And these stages are faithfully reflected in the developing story of the Bible. There have been times when men would scarcely

[1] A. F. Kirkpatrick, *The Doctrine of the Prophets*, 249.

have been entitled to be called righteous, if they had not rejoiced when they saw the vengeance. There have existed conditions under which men could scarcely have believed in the Eternal who loveth righteousness, if they had not expected Him to wash His footsteps in the blood of the ungodly. Passions which, on one side, are allied to the forces of evil may, on the other, approach very near to the soul of goodness. It is perhaps only God who can entirely separate the love of justice from the hatred of unjust men; and, for ourselves, we are bound to remember that where there is no passion for righteousness there is no conviction of sin. Where there is no conviction of sin there is no opening of the heart to redeeming love. While, therefore, we see the limitations of a joy like that with which Nahum welcomed the messenger who announced the pitiless destruction of Nineveh, let us not fail to recognize the loyalty by which it was inspired. While Nineveh stood God was openly defied. When it fell God was vindicated. The hatred of the enemy belongs to the frail and the transient. The love of the right, it is that which is imperishable and eternal.

2. Faith and hope have carried the people of God a long way before we again meet with the words of the text in the writings of him who has been termed the Evangelical Prophet. They have developed not only in meaning, but in form also, before this great writer weaves them into the texture of his prophecy. 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, thy God reigneth.' Here we breathe the atmosphere of Handel's *Messiah*. Nahum had hailed the messenger, but he never ventured to say that his feet were beautiful. He was perhaps too vividly aware of the unregenerate element in his joy. There we saw the picture of a lurid sunset at the close of a troubled day. Here we seem to listen to the voices of happy pilgrims singing in the still and peaceful night.

Not that all thought of the vengeance of our God has passed from the mind of the Evangelical Prophet. The cup of staggering which Israel had drunk is indeed to be put into the hand of those that oppressed them. But the ransomed of the Lord do not stand agaze at the overthrow of their foes. They are marching to Zion, away from the land of their captivity. And, as one commentator has beautifully put it, 'peace takes the music from vengeance,' as the seer's vision beholds the exiles approaching the city of their dreams, to look one another in the face in presence of a returning Lord. For these liberated captives have probed the mystery of suffering far more deeply than those who are content with the spectacle of retributive justice. After all, vengeance only brings a new pathos into human affairs. The cruelties of Saul are avenged when his seven sons are hanged before the Lord, but the figure of Rizpah, as she wards off the birds by day and the beasts by night from the bodies of her beloved moves our compassion from one generation to another. The injustice and cruelty of the wicked are probably something less than the appalling catastrophes of which they are often the instrument, and causes for which we can discover no human responsibility are ten times more relentless than the malice of mankind. Thus men are insensibly led to wider and deeper views of pain. Though it was true that the suffering nation had laid its back as the ground for the passage of Babylon's fierce armies, yet they were led under prophetic inspiration to fix their contrite hearts rather upon the judgments whereby God had chastened His children, the sufferings which had worked repentance, the pain through which love, carrying grief and bearing transgressions, had accomplished the redemption of the people. For them righteousness has a nobler and completer vindication than the punishment of tyrants. God has won through to the fulfilment of His loving purpose. Afflicted in the afflictions of His people, His own arm brought salvation unto Him, and His righteousness it upheld Him. Truth is finally established, not when the wicked perish, but when God comes to His own. The vision is of life and not of death, for law is swallowed up in love. 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that saith to Zion, thy God reigneth.'

3. But we must pass to the third and last stage in the development of these words before the full glory of which they are capable is seen. St Paul cites them directly from Isaiah, but with a significant omission, which all unconsciously, as it would appear, makes the

words his own. 'Behold upon the mountains,' Nahum cried, 'the feet of him that bringeth good tidings.' Isaiah retains 'the mountains,' but exclaims, 'How beautiful are the feet.' And now St Paul in his turn drops all reference to the mountains. 'How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things.' So the Christian Apostle modifies the thought of the Hebrew prophet. The mountains are gone, for it is no longer the good news brought to the desolate city, now bidden to awake and sing, but the Catholic evangel, carried to every quarter of the earth, that fills the imagination of the great missionary :

Let all the world in every corner sing,
'My God and King!'

It is no longer the hill-country of Judæa that is to resound with *Magnificat*. The vast plains of Mesopotamia, the great roads of the Roman Empire, the banks of India's ancient rivers, the farthest bounds of the West, are to be made beautiful with the feet of the angel messengers who bear the everlasting gospel.

Could anything be more wonderful than the way in which this famous text has been made to turn round upon itself, as it expresses the mind of God's servants at successive stages in the unfolding of His purpose? The field of Nahum's vision is no wider than that which caused the faith of the Psalmist to express itself in words which betoken the overthrow of the enemies of God, 'Thou, O Lord, shalt have them in derision; and thou shalt laugh all the heathen to scorn.' Then the mouth of the prophet was filled with a sweeter laughter, when the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, when He visited and redeemed His people. But the Christian rejoices in the splendid paradox that the coming of God's Messiah, the vindication of the eternal righteousness, is not the destruction, but the salvation of His enemies. East and West and North and South His messengers go forth. Their feet are beautiful, because wherever they come they bear the word of reconciliation and peace.

'How lovely are the messengers that preach us the gospel of peace.' We listen to the anthem, but how difficult it is to attain that evangelical spirit whose attitude towards the peoples that dwell upon the face of the earth is determined by the supreme desire to preach Christ to the nations! How much easier to live on the level of Nahum's prophecy! There are so many prejudices to surmount, so many causes of alienation to overcome before we can will the salvation of all men and their fellowship with us in the gospel. It is neither the culture of one nation nor the free institutions of another which will dominate the world. Its destiny is neither to adopt the energetic civilization of the West, nor to be absorbed in Oriental calm. We shall only have enough humility to recognize our immense need of one another when we have learned our common need of Christ. In our patriotisms, our national ideals, our party principles, our personal enthusiasms, there is much to be forgiven. Ignorant of God's righteousness, we too often seek to establish our own righteousness. We do not subject ourselves to the righteousness of God. If we did, we should not cease to proclaim Christ as the hope of every contrite heart, the only joy of the weary nations, the peace of a divided world.

I cannot tell how He will win the nations,
How He will claim His earthly heritage,
How satisfy the needs and aspirations
Of East and West, of sinner and of sage.
But this I know, all flesh shall see His glory
When He the Saviour of the world is known.
And some glad day His sun shall shine in splendour
And He shall reap the harvest He has sown.

I cannot tell how all the lands shall worship
When at His bidding every storm is stilled.
Or who can say how great the jubilation
When all the hearts of men with love are filled.
But this I know, the skies will thrill with rapture,
And myriad, myriad human voices sing,
And earth to heaven and heaven to earth will answer,
At last the Saviour of the world is King.

The Fewness of Christ's Disciples

Rom. x. 16.—'Who hath believed our report?'

1. The prophet here quoted by St Paul is complaining of the incredulity of his people. He has foretold the coming of a Deliverer to Israel, who should appear in strange and unexpected shape. Instead of the glorious and triumphant monarch whom the national sentiment and imagination had identified with the expected Messiah, the prophet paints for them

one who has no form nor comeliness nor beauty; 'his visage marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.' Instead of a great prince welcomed by the enthusiasm of a ransomed nation, they see one 'despised and rejected,' 'a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.' Instead of a king ruling as God's own appointed minister and representative, they see one so fearfully 'smitten of God and afflicted,' that 'the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.'

Such is the picture which the prophet is called upon to paint, and which he paints with absolute faithfulness; not a tone is softened, not a colour qualified; and there it stands, in all its rigid outlines, a thing of astonishment to the world—a thing utterly and completely different from everything that had been hoped for and expected. And who that has reflected on the strength and tenacity of popular prejudice can wonder when he finds such a reception given to the prophet's words that, in the very midst of his description, he is obliged to break off into the half-indignant and half-pathetic cry, 'Who hath believed our report?'

The pathos of the question did not go unnoticed in a later day. It is quoted in the Fourth Gospel, as well as in this chapter. The great Apostle to the Gentiles is setting forth the universality of the redemption which he has been commissioned to preach. 'There is no difference,' he says—in words which must have sounded very strangely in the ears of many of his countrymen—'There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek. . . . For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.' There is, he adds, a special reason why he should carry his gospel into other lands. The Jewish people, as a nation, have rejected their Messiah. God has stretched forth His hands to them and they have refused to hear. The message has been spoken and they have neither listened nor obeyed. And then, with a touch of the same passionate sorrow shown by the prophet of old, and with the knowledge of even a sadder rejection and a more terrible unbelief, St Paul recalls and appropriates to himself the very words in which the national apostasy had been lamented: 'Who hath believed our report?'

2. The fewness of Christ's disciples has been, no doubt, in all ages, as in the time of the Apostle, a cause for wonder. If God did indeed intend His revelation to give light to something more than a fragment of our race, if the Cross is indeed the symbol of a world-wide redemption, if Christ being lifted up does indeed draw all men unto Him, why have so few taken a place, at any rate consciously and deliberately, in the society which He founded?

(1) The Jews of an earlier day were deaf to the prophet's pleading. Why? Because he spoke to them of a despised and rejected Christ, living in sorrow and humility, and bearing the sins of many. But if only they had looked a little closer at that visage marred and that form without comeliness, might they not have seen there the traces of the very King in His beauty? If they had watched more patiently that chastisement with which, as a transgressor, He was to be 'smitten of God and afflicted,' might they not have better understood the love of the Father towards a Son in whom He is 'well-pleased'? The Jews of a later day turned away with contempt from the teaching of St Paul. Why? Because he spoke to them of a Galilean peasant and a crucified Christ. 'Is not this the carpenter's son?' 'Out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.' Such was their reply. But had they chosen to think that all great and high things have small beginnings, surely the mystery and insignificance of that birth and life and death would never have baffled them so!

And yet, even to-day, do we not often see symptoms of the same temper still surviving in our midst? Men will still ask for signs and wonders in Christianity; they look for something miraculous, startling, intellectually brilliant or overwhelmingly convincing; and as this is wanting they remain dissatisfied. Or, it may be, within the circle of their own life and conduct, they fancy that they cannot be real followers of Christ, unless there is something heroic or unusual about them. They do not seem to understand that the quiet heroism of daily life is the truest token of the Christian spirit. They do not realize that the God for whom they have listened in vain in the fire, the earthquake, and the wind, may be heard most clearly in the still, small voice.

¶ Once at the Epiphany season a preacher spoke to his people on 'The Road of the Star,' a sermon which had to do with the lovely story of the wise Men who followed their heavenly sign on the long, romantic journey that led to

the presence of Christ. After it a young mother came to him and said, 'Often I should like to go on roads like that, and I cannot. There are Sundays when I want to come to church, and instead I have to stay at home and look after a sick child.' Those words of hers made him understand how important it is that the loftiest religious themes must have their feet upon the earth; and on the next Sunday he tried to preach, as though for her, on 'The Road of the Common Day.' On that road most people are walking. They are busy about small matters. They are grappling with obscure temptations. They are going forward to tedious duties where there is no heroic drum-beat to which they can keep step. If they cannot seem to go on romantic spiritual journeys seeking Christ, they need to know that Christ is already with them in whatever beauty of spirit they manifest in the ordinary things they do. Over their small post of duty the star of the meaning of God can shine as truly as it shone once over a stable in a little town.[1]

(2) Again, Christianity may be intended for all mankind; but in practice we see that a principle of selection is, and must be, at work. The call may come to every man; but every man may not choose to receive it. God will make no man a Christian against his will; and where there is hardness of heart, or an overfondness of pleasure, or a character weakened by careless living or absorption in the cares of this world, may it not easily happen that the Word is crushed, or withered, or made unfruitful?

So we see everywhere in the Gospels this unavoidable selection of men. Christ is perpetually choosing—choosing for His disciples those who are willing to hear and to obey the call. In the very first portrait given of Him, He is represented with a winnowing fan, separating the wheat from the chaff. He does not indeed seem to have ever expected that He would be welcomed by the world at large, or that at His coming He would find His faith triumphant upon the earth.

¶ Christ never expected, or taught His disciples to expect, that His teaching would meet wide acceptance or exercise political influence. 'The world'—organized human society—was the enemy, and was to continue the enemy. His message, He foresaw, would be scorned and rejected by the majority; and those who preached it were to expect persecution. This warning is repeated so often in the Gospels that it would be superfluous to give quotations. He made it quite plain that the big battalions are never likely to be gathered before the narrow gate.[1]

Christ regarded His Church as a small society intended to act upon the world about it with a definite influence; comparing it now with the leaven which modifies the surrounding substance, now with the lamp which shines far out into the surrounding darkness. And if this is what He wished Christianity to be and to do, who can deny that He has been and is being successful? The Church has so far transformed the world that, even now, after these few brief centuries have passed, the whole fabric of modern civilization is, partly in practice and still more in theory, built upon Christian principles; and there is no man living who would be what he is to-day if Christ had never trod this earth. In this sense we may say that, by a secret power and a subtle and pervasive influence, men have been compelled to own His sovereignty, to respond to His call, and to believe the 'report' of those who have preached in His name.

[1] W. R. Bowie, *The Renewing Gospel*, 32.

The Genesis of Faith

Rom. x. 17.—'So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ' (R.V.).

Faith has its own history. It has its hour of advent in the soul, and the growth of its energy throughout the whole being. A great believer is a man in whom faith has become the splendid and daring dynamic of life. Here St Paul deals with the genesis of faith, and sets it down in an aside which simply declares what he suggests every believer knows. 'So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ.'

1. '*Faith cometh by hearing.*'—There is a spiritual condition of unbelief, and that unbelief is due to the fact that the soul has not heard the Word of Christ. There have been great epochs of unbelief when men seemed unable to realize that Christ has spoken. A haze settled upon the whole spiritual horizon and the great certainties became insecure. In

[1] W. R. Inge.

the eighteenth century the religion of England sank into a mere Deism, and the truth of the gospel was boldly denied by men who had not ears to hear. There are men who find it difficult to escape the darkening shadows of doubt. Those who have read Amiel's *Journal* know the wistful and pathetic feeling after the certainty of God and of His grace which was never fully satisfied. To many men faith is no more than acquiescence. They are never quite sure of the verities of the Christian revelation.

But 'faith cometh by hearing.' A voice speaks within the soul and the conviction of things unseen, the assurance of God and His grace shine out in clear certainty. As Paul says it is not simply the truth of the Word which evokes this faith. The message of God and of His being and power may be borne in upon the mind with conclusive proof. The truth of the gospel may be so clearly perceived and so strongly held that it can be taught with cogent power. It is only too easy to describe the form of godliness and to deny its power. A voice must be heard by a finer organ than the outer ear. It must be acknowledged by a higher power than the conscience. It must be a voice within the soul. 'With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.' When the spirit of the contrite man hears the voice of Christ speaking within, then, and not till then, has faith been born. There is a mood, a season, a moral and spiritual condition in which we believe, and it is then the voice of Christ utters an appeal, and as we hear, He comes in as the guest of the soul.

¶ The electrician sets up on some high bluff by the seashore his wireless installation. He prepares his delicate apparatus so keenly sensitive that it can send its message a thousand miles away, and can catch and interpret every vibration which is set in motion by the touch or even the breath of man. Far beyond the reach of sight a ship is fitted with an attuned instrument. But the apparatus may be out of order, or the operator may be absent from his post, or he may be asleep. The message vibrates and strikes his wires in vain. It is not heard. Another, a mile distant, hears and interprets the word. As he does so, personalities and truths and messages become sure and certain knowledge. They are all beyond the range of sight. But their word has been heard, and faith in them is inevitable.

If we take up the Old Testament and recall the coming of faith to its stalwart witnesses, to Noah, to Abraham, to Moses, to Samuel, to all the psalmists and prophets, we find it true that their faith came by hearing. If we read our New Testament we mark how many heard the Word of Jesus, sometimes to be held in admiring wonder and sometimes to be moved to derision and scorn. But only those who heard with the inner ear believed. A woman by a well, a publican by the roadside, a devout spirit sitting at Christ's feet, heard not merely the Words on His lips, but the inner accent of His Spirit, and they believed. To-day multitudes can bear testimony that in some hour when they listened to the story of His Cross, or in some time when God made a silence in their lives, or in some moment when a call rang through the soul, they found it true that faith cometh by hearing.

2. '*And hearing by the Word of Christ.*'—The Word of Christ—the message of God in Christ, and through Christ, does not come to every man in the same way. 'God's love is as various as man's need,' writes an English theologian, and God's grace is as wise as infinite wisdom can devise. In all likelihood, every one has a unique experience in the moment in which faith is born within. It is always a solitary experience, and always coloured by our temperament and affected by our past. Yet we may venture to say that there are four distinct ways in which the Word of Christ is presented when it is heard by the soul.

(1) There is *the hearing of the Written Word.* The message in the pages of the Scripture must always be given the supreme place. To all men who believe that God has spoken to the fathers by the prophets, and to later days by His Son, the message of His love in the words of Scripture has a unique power. If one could summon up all who have found faith as they read the Scriptures, if one could make a census roll of those who have been arrested by the written Word, a great army would set down their names. Or, if we could summon up the number of those who have found life through believing as they humbly read and pondered some of the golden sentences of Scripture, we should find them to be a vast company among the great multitude whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

¶ How shall I describe to you what I found in the New Testament? I had not read it for many years, and was prejudiced against it before I took it in hand. The light which struck Paul with blindness on his way to Damascus was not more strange (than that which fell on me) when I suddenly discovered the fulfilment of all hopes, the highest perfection of philosophy, the key to all the seeming contradictions of the physical and moral world.[1]

(2) There is *the hearing of the Spoken Word.* The great confessions of the Reformers placed peculiar reliance on the spoken Word. 'The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the Word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith, unto salvation.' There is no doubt of the power of the sympathetic and pleading human voice to be the medium of the voice of Christ. The evidences abound in the witnesses who set down their names as having been brought into this new relationship to God as they listen to the spoken Word. As John Wesley sat and heard Peter Bohler, as Spurgeon went into the little wayside chapel and heard the preacher speak on the words, 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,' as Lyman Abbott was quickened by the appeal of Beecher—to take only conspicuous names—so countless thousands owe their changed lives to the spoken Word. The Church needs more evangelists. Above all it needs more converts who will witness by a constant testimony to the truth, and to the power of Christ to regenerate the soul and to transform the life. It has been declared with truth that never did any man stand forth and confess what God had done for him, when that testimony was given without affectation and without ostentation, without finding that some one soul heard, through the simple accents of the believer, the voice of Christ, and hearing believed.

(3) Again, it is *the hearing of the Incarnate Word.*—'The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.' What is this glory of the Word? It is the fullness of grace and truth. It is the stainless character of Jesus. As Christ went about doing good, as men beheld Him even when no word fell from His lips, that Incarnate Word spoke to conscience and heart, and men believed.

The Word is still incarnate, though in the frail vessel of humanity, and it still creates faith. It is not often that sanctity brings forth faith in a vivid and dramatic experience. Yet could we recall and estimate our past, as we may one day be able to do, we might find ourselves among those who have been led into faith in God and in His Son by the life of some humble believer. Those who have lived with gracious and loyal spirits speak of the contagion of faith. But the contagion of faith is really the uprising of faith in response to the testimony of a life in which Christ's holiness walks once more among men. It is impossible for a young heart at least to live with one who overcomes temptation, endures suffering, resists all mean thoughts, and abounds in gentleness and kindness, all of which are the fruit of faith in Christ, without also becoming unconsciously a believer.

¶ A young man who was crossing a Highland moor marked a lonely figure busy among its peats. He made his way to the spot and fell into an easy conversation. The Celtic reticence laid its restraint upon the peat-gatherer's words. But a shy question touched the springs of the old man's inner life, and the talk became intimate and tender. As they came down the hill together the peasant pointed out a little cottage by the roadside which had been the home of a man out of whose heart the vital godliness of the parish had come. His life had been a steadfast witness to Christ. His prayers had led others into the secret of the Lord. It was in his cottage that the speaker had entered into life.[1]

> From their eyes He beckons men,
> And from their hearts His love is shed,
> And folk lose sight of them,
> And see the Christ instead.

(4) Again, it is *the hearing of the Mystic Word.*—Nothing irrational, or occult, or unreal, is meant by the mystic Word. It is the statement of the truth that the Word of Christ speaks within us and quickens faith at times, in an action too subtle and delicate to be easily explained. The astronomer exposes a delicately sensitized plate for a whole night to the star-strewn heavens. In the morning he finds

[1] Max Müller.

[1] W. M. Clow.

recorded there the light of stars beyond the power of even his telescope to discover. So the Word of Christ comes to us, sometimes all unaware. The voice of Nature which entrances the poet of the nineteenth Psalm may be the medium of the voice of Christ. A man may find that God has made a silence in his life, and new thoughts, new rebukes, new hopes, new desires, coming he knows not how, are knocking at his soul. A man may enter an atmosphere in which the noise and bustle of the world is stilled, and a new peace falls upon the spirit. Richard Jefferies has said that men do not know what they miss because they will not be still. It is always in some time of stillness that we fall into a mood of yearning, are visited by truer conceptions of ourselves and our lives, by a peculiar tenderness towards the things of Christ, and then there comes to us Christ's whisper, or even Christ's look, and faith in Him is born with all its wondrous energies and its eternal peace.

¶ It was as Elizabeth Barrett Browning heard the Word of Christ in this mystic way that she wrote her sonnet on 'Comfort':

> Speak low to me, my Saviour, low and sweet,
> From out the hallelujahs, sweet and low,
> Lest I should fear and fall, and miss Thee so
> Who art not missed by any that entreat.

'Have they not heard?' asks Paul. His answer is that they have heard with the hearing of the ear, but not with the hearing of the heart, that inner core of desire and will, and, therefore, they have not believed. That was the pathetic reproach of Christ. 'Who hath ears to hear, let him hear,' is the constant Word on His lips. That was why the sower's harvest was so meagre. How shall men secure that heart which believeth unto righteousness? The man who will do the will of God as he knows it, and pray that God will lead him into light and truth, will not wait long until he find that One who hearkens has crossed his threshold, and that faith which is the saving grace is born within his soul.

THE MYSTERY OF GOD'S WAYS

Rom. xi. 33.—'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!'

St Paul here comes to the end of his resources. He has been pondering the ways of God and he sees that they are past finding out. There are heights of wisdom beyond his imagining, and deeps of judgment which he cannot plumb. Surrounded and overshadowed by the mystery of it all he can only stand 'lost in wonder, love, and praise.' This is a mood common to all profound thinkers and deep searching spirits. Prophet and apostle, poet and preacher, scientist and philosopher are at one regarding this. The mind is baffled, human language fails, and they are reduced at last to reverent silence. Augustine said he spoke, not because words were adequate, but because something must be said. Newton pictured himself as a child gathering a few pebbles on the shore of a boundless sea. And Tintoretto, the great painter, said in his old age, 'The sea grows ever greater.'

In contrast to that there appears to be in many minds to-day the idea that modern science has gone far towards dispelling the mystery of things, and bringing all out into the clear cold light of day. Nothing could be further from the truth. If there was a certain cocksureness in nineteenth-century science that mood has quite passed away, and the science of to-day is humble, reverent, and deeply conscious of its limitations. With the expansion of man's knowledge there has gone a corresponding expansion of the unknown. While science, from being a feeble lamp, has become a great searchlight casting its beams far and wide and revealing many wonderful things, the overspreading arc of mystery was never more tremendous and awesome.

Let us, then, ponder for a little as best we may the mystery of God's ways in Nature, in history, and in grace, for nothing is better fitted to lead our minds and hearts to humility and reverence, to wonder and adoration.

I

God's Ways in Nature

God's ways in Nature are full of mystery. All that we see and know is, as Job said, 'the mere fringe of his force, the faintest whisper we can hear of him. Who knows the full thunder of his power?' All our knowledge of Nature reaches us through our senses, and especially through the eye. Now the eye, wonderful as it is, is an exceedingly narrow window through which to look out upon this wide and glorious world. When rays of light of certain wave-lengths strike our eyes, then the world is filled with all the colours of the rainbow from red to violet. But the rays of light to which our eyes are sensitive constitute an absurdly insignificant part of the whole range of radiation. Beneath the red and beyond the violet the scale extends practically without limit. We have discovered healing properties in ultra-violet rays, and we know that infra-red rays can pierce miles of fog and give photographs in which the green grass is white as snow. But what the world would look like if we could actually see with these rays we have not the least idea.

What is true of the eye is equally true of all our other senses. The hearing of the ear is very limited. Only a few octaves are audible, and beyond that—silence! A world of melody too fine for human ears to hear! When Shakespeare, looking up to the bright floor of heaven, declares

> There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
> But in his motion like an angel sings,

there may be more in that than mere poetic fancy. One cannot but imagine there must be a busy hum through all the insect world, and soft whisperings among the petals of the flowers. George Eliot ventures the suggestion that: 'If we could hear the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, we should die of the roar that lies on the other side of silence.' It may well be so. The plenitude of sound that lies on the other side of silence might deafen us, and the blaze of glory that lies on the other side of darkness might strike us blind. But undoubtedly our whole outlook upon the world of Nature would be completely altered if the windows of our senses were thrown wider open. It would bring a revelation comparable to the opening of blind eyes or the unstopping of deaf ears. Whole new worlds of beauty and harmony, hitherto unknown and unimagined, would swim into our ken. Meantime it all lies veiled in mystery.

Moreover we can only view Nature from our own particular standpoint. We are part of the world which we seek to comprehend, and we can only view it from within. We are as little able to see the many-sided truth in its fullness as a man shut up in one of the rooms is able to see all round the house. There are creatures in the deeps of the ocean in an environment which to us would be abysmal darkness and intolerable gloom, but which to them is so necessary a condition of life that when they are brought up into our world they immediately expire. But we ourselves live at the bottom of a sea of air, miles deep, which presses heavily upon us though we are unconscious of its weight, and which filters and diminishes the sunlight as it passes down to us. No human eye has ever seen the sun in all its glory; no human eye could bear the sight. Here we dwell in a region of comparative gloom, peering round us and judging all things as they present themselves to us in the dim and broken light.

No science can remove these limitations or dispel the mystery that hangs about us. Science has done wonders, but there are depths beyond its ken. Man with his telescope counts the stars but he cannot see to the end of space. With his microscope he searches into the world of the minute, and has even broken through into sub-atomic regions, but the Creator's workmanship is too fine for his analysis. It is vain to think that the increasing light of science will drive the circle of mystery further back, so that we may hope that in time it will remain only as a negligible fringe on the horizon, if it be not quite dispelled. On the contrary Nature is steeped in mystery to the very core, so that every advance of science reveals the world as more utterly mysterious than it had seemed before. For, as Tennyson says,

> Knowledge is the swallow on the lake
> That sees and stirs the surface-shadow there,
> But never yet hath dipt into the Abysm,
> The Abysm of all abysms, beneath, within

The blue of sky and sea, the green of earth,
And in the million-millionth of a grain
Which cleft and cleft again for evermore,
And ever vanishing, never vanishes.

Truly, God's ways in Nature are past finding out.

II

God's Ways in History

The same may be said of God's ways in history. It was this which was chiefly occupying the mind of the Apostle. In particular he had been pondering the mystery of God's dealings with the Jews. Ah, there you face a problem and a mystery which remains unsolved to this day. God chose Israel to be His own special people. He redeemed them, guided and disciplined them, sent His holy prophets to forewarn them of the coming of the Christ, and to prepare them to be His missionaries to the nations. But when Christ came they rejected Him and were themselves rejected. Salvation passed to the Gentiles and the Jews became as outcasts. To St Paul, a patriotic Jew, it was a bitter thought, an intolerable mystery. He could only believe that some Divine purpose lay behind it all, that God was working out His plan with an unfathomable wisdom which man's mind could not as yet search out. He could only hope and pray that all Israel would be saved, that as their rejection had brought blessing to the Gentiles so their restoration would be as life from the dead, and thus in the end it would be seen that out of a great evil God in His wonderful working had brought a greater good.

There is a mystery, not only in God's dealings with the Jews, but in His ways with all mankind. His ways in history are past finding out. We ask, why has the course of history followed the line it has, and there is no one that can answer the question. Why all these wars and cruelties, these tyrannies and oppressions, these pains and sufferings of sentient beings? Why death itself, so that 'the world is dark with griefs and graves'? We do not need to search the records of the past for evidence of these things. The world was never more conscious than it is to-day of the mystery of its own existence, nor ever felt more deeply its intolerable burden. Why has the world been so impoverished and devastated by war? Why can the nations find no road to peace? Why did not God stop the War? Why does He still suffer age-long evils to endure? Why cannot things be shaped nearer to heart's desire? The world is all very different from what we should have supposed it would be, if it is the product of wisdom and love. Here we bow before mysteries which have broken countless human hearts. We feel, as Wordsworth did, 'the heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world,' and we are ready to cry out with the Psalmist, 'Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble? Why art thou so far from helping us?' We can but 'trust that somehow good will be the final goal of ill,' and there we must leave the problem in all its inscrutable mystery.

III

God's Ways in Grace

God's ways in history can never begin to be understood till we attain to some knowledge of His ways in grace. For in the light of the Christian revelation we are assured that all God's ways are ways of grace. 'His tender mercies are over *all* his works.' There is a mystery of iniquity in the world. Those evils from which we suffer are in a very high degree the fruit of man's sin. It is man's inhumanity to man that has made countless thousands mourn. The wars, cruelties, oppressions and wrongs which form so grievous a part of the burden of humanity are the outcome of human lusts and passions. This is a world which is in rebellion against God. The depth and intensity of that spirit of evil is made manifest at the Cross. Here is the true measure of it and the final judgment upon it. If the question be asked, what sort of a world is this, and how does it stand in relation to God, the truest answer is to say that it is a world which could not tolerate the presence in it of God's own Son. When He came full of grace and truth He got no welcome, when He spake as never man spake there were few that heeded His word, when He went about ever doing good, ever willing to help and save, the opposition to Him only grew more and more bitter, till at last they cried out, 'Away with him,' and nailed Him to the tree. It is a world that has fully earned and brought upon itself the just judgment of God. Martin Luther said in his

own boisterous way, 'If I were Almighty God, and the world had treated my son as it treated God's Son, I'd knock the world in pieces.'

But here we come to the crowning mystery, the unspeakable mystery of God's ways in grace. It is in this connection that the Divine word is spoken, 'My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.' In face of the world's sin God is ever patient and forgiving, ever seeking to redeem. There is no disposition on His side to retaliate, or in any way to act as men would act under so great provocation. On the contrary, that Cross of Calvary, which is the crowning evidence of human wickedness, proves to be at the same time the supreme revelation of God's redeeming love. It was all in His loving purpose; it was the price He was willing to pay. Since man's need was so desperate and the world could be redeemed in no other way, God spared not His only Son but gave Him up for us all.

It all seems incredible, too wonderful to be true. When the Psalmist looked up at the starry sky and considered the majesty of God's works in the heavens, he was overpowered by a sense of his own insignificance and exclaimed, 'What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?' But it is not man's physical insignificance which comes between him and God. It is sin which cleaves the unbridgeable gulf between. Man may be 'but a microbe clinging to a grain of sand,' but that is quite irrelevant. Darkness and light are both alike to God, and physical minuteness hides not from His all-seeing eye. But 'who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?' Who can bridge the gulf which separates a holy God from a sinful world? God in Christ has wrought the miracle in a way past our finding out. 'I have now preached for forty-three years,' said Principal John Cairns, 'and have been a professor of theology for more than twenty, and I find every year how much grander the Gospel of the grace of God becomes, and how much deeper, vaster, and more unsearchable is the religion of Christ.'

We can never get beyond the wonder of it, nor ever plumb its depths. St Paul prayed that the Christians in Ephesus might be 'able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height' of the love of Christ, but he is impelled to add that it 'passeth knowledge.' It overwhelmed the mighty soul of the Apostle,

> For the love of God is broader
> Than the measures of man's mind.

We cannot take it in; there is no comprehending it. We stand upon the shore and look out upon it. We dip into the margin of it, but

> There's a wideness in God's mercy,
> Like the wideness of the sea.

And, as Tintoretto said, 'The sea grows ever greater.' There is no end to the mystery and the wonder. That profound thinker Rabbi Duncan said, 'There's an infinity in Him whom we love supremely. There would come a time in eternity when we would be tired of the enjoyment of God, if there was not an infinity in Him, if there was any bottom to that ocean, or any shore around it.'

Surely the lesson of all this is that it becomes us to be humble in our ignorance and deeply reverent in presence of the mysteries of God. How very little we know! How incompetent we are to judge! 'Now we see through a glass darkly.' Therefore, 'if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.' It is too soon to demand explanations. It is folly to take offence at the unexplained. The wisest of men are most conscious of the limitations of human knowledge. 'The finest achievement for a thinker,' said Goethe, 'is to have fathomed what may be fathomed, and quietly to revere the unfathomable.'

At the same time we shall thank God that light is come into the world, that the true light shines upon us through the dark. Much is mysterious, but certain vital things are plain. Amid the encircling gloom the way of life is clearly discernible. If any man will but follow that light and walk steadfastly in that path it will lead him onward to the perfect day. For this is our Christian hope that we shall yet pierce through the veil of mystery that hangs so thick about us, and 'know as also we are known.' Therefore we say, 'Be still, my soul,

All now mysterious shall be bright at last.'

J. H. Morrison

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

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